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ANGELICA MESITI

BIOGRAPHY

Angelica Mesiti (b.1976) is originally from Sydney and currently lives and works in Paris.

Her multi-channel sound, performance and video installations have been internationally recognised through major exhibitions and significant commissions. In 2019, she represented Australia at the 58th Venice Biennale with the three-channel video installation *ASSEMBLY*, exploring notions of plurality and non-linguistic communication that have become the hallmark of her work. In 2024 she presented *The Rites of When*, a major commission for the TANK at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, where Mesiti pays tribute to ritual practices of seasonal renewal, both ancient and contemporary. In 2026 the work will be presented as a solo presentation at the Tinguely Museum in Basel.

Since establishing her career in the 2000s, Mesiti has become known for her distinctive moving-image and sound-based works that pay homage to individual and communal forms of expression, ranging from sign language, choreographic gesture, Morse code and whistling to ancestral musical traditions, body percussion and communication between non-human species.

Mesiti's recent solo projects include *Future Perfect Continuous* at Arter, Istanbul (2025), *In the Round*, Talbot Rice Gallery, Edinburgh (2021); *Mother Tongue*, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki (2020), *A Hundred Years* (2019–20), a film commissioned by the Australian War Memorial; and *When Doing is Saying*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2019). After its presentation in the Australian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, *ASSEMBLY* travelled to Arnolfini Contemporary Art Centre, Bristol (2020) and the National Gallery of Australia, Kamberri/Canberra (2022–23).

In addition to Venice, Mesiti has participated in the Singapore, Busan, Adelaide, Sydney, Istanbul, Sharjah, Kochi-Muziris and TarraWarra biennials, and the Aichi and Auckland triennials. Other selected group exhibitions include: *Science Fiction; A Non-History of Plants*, The MEP Paris (2024), *The Musical Brain*, High Line, New York (2021); *The Future of Silence: When Your Tongue Vanishes*, Nam June Paik Art Center, Yongin-si, South Korea (2020); and *Station to Station: A 30 Day Happening*, Barbican, London (2015).

Angelica Mesiti has been a studio professor at the École des Beaux-Arts de Paris since 2019.

BIOGRAPHIE

Angelica Mesiti (née en 1976) est originaire de Sydney et vit et travaille actuellement à Paris.

Ses installations sonores multicanaux, ses performances et ses installations vidéo ont été reconnues internationalement grâce à des expositions majeures et des commandes importantes. En 2019, elle a représenté l'Australie à la 58e Biennale de Venise avec l'installation vidéo à trois canaux *ASSEMBLY*, explorant les notions de pluralité et de communication non linguistique qui sont devenues la marque de fabrique de son travail. En 2024, elle a présenté *The Rites of When*, une commande majeure pour le TANK de l'Art Gallery of New South Wales, dans laquelle Mesiti rend hommage aux pratiques rituelles du renouveau saisonnier, tant anciennes que contemporaines. En 2026, l'œuvre sera présentée dans le cadre d'une exposition solo au Musée Tinguely de Bâle.

Depuis le début de sa carrière dans les années 2000, Mesiti s'est fait connaître pour ses œuvres distinctives basées sur l'image animée et le son, qui rendent hommage aux formes d'expression individuelles et collectives, allant du langage des signes, des gestes chorégraphiques, du code Morse et des sifflements aux traditions musicales ancestrales, aux percussions corporelles et à la communication entre espèces non humaines.

Parmi les expositions personnelles récentes de Mesiti, figurent *Future Perfect Continuous* à Arter, Istanbul (2025), *In the Round*, Talbot Rice Gallery, Édimbourg (2021) ; *Mother Tongue*, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki (2020), *A Hundred Years* (2019-2020), un film commandé par l'Australian War Memorial ; et *When Doing is Saying*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2019). Après sa présentation au pavillon australien de la Biennale de Venise, *ASSEMBLY* a été exposée au centre d'art contemporain Arnolfini, à Bristol (2020), et à la National Gallery of Australia, à Kamberri/Canberra (2022-2023).

Outre Venise, Mesiti a participé aux biennales de Singapour, Busan, Adélaïde, Sydney, Istanbul, Sharjah, Kochi-Muziris et TarraWarra, ainsi qu'aux triennales d'Aichi et d'Auckland. Elle a également participé à de nombreuses expositions collectives telles que : *Science Fiction* ; *A Non-History of Plants*, MEP Paris (2024), *The Musical Brain*, High Line, New York (2021) ; *The Future of Silence: When Your Tongue Vanishes*, Nam June Paik Art Center, Yongin-si, Corée du Sud (2020) ; et *Station to Station: A 30 Day Happening*, Barbican, Londres (2015).

Angelica Mesiti est professeure d'atelier à l'École des Beaux-Arts de Paris depuis 2019.

ANGELICA MESITI

Born 1976 Sydney, Australia
Lives and works in Sydney and Paris

EDUCATION

Masters of Fine Art, College of Fine Arts, UNSW, Australia
Bachelor of Fine Arts with Honours, College of Fine Arts, UNSW, Australia

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2026 *Reverb*, Tinguely Museum, Basel, CH
2025 *Acoustic Light*, Galerie Allen, Paris, FR
Angelica Mesiti: Future Perfect Continuous, cur. Nilüfer Sasmazer, ARTER museum, Istanbul, TR
Rapture, PAARC (Pôle Artistique Créatif Contemporain), Labenne FR
2024 *The Rites of When*, Commissioned video installation, TANK - Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, AU
Sidereal, Commissioned video installation, Public art: Projet MIRE, gare du Chêne-Bourg, coproduction avec le Fonds d'art contemporain de la Ville de Genève, CH
Peace More Real, Galerie Allen, Paris, FR
2023 *Commande du film TREMBLEMENT pour la série BY NIGHT* par Misia Films et les Galeries Lafayette, FR
Première au Festival Isola Edipo, 80ème Festival international du Film, Lido, Venice, IT
2022 *ASSEMBLY*, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, AU
Future Perfect Continuous, Anna Swartz Gallery, Melbourne, AU
2021 *In The Round*, Talbot Rice Gallery, University of Edinburgh, Edimbourg
A Hundred Years: Australian War Memorial Commission, AU
Over the Air and Underground, Galerie Allen, Paris, FR
2020 *ASSEMBLY*, Arnolfini Contemporary Art Centre, Bristol, UK
Mother Tongue, Auckland Art Gallery, NZ
2019 *ASSEMBLY*, 58th Venice Biennale, cur. Juliana Engberg, Australian Pavillion, Venice, IT
Quand faire c'est dire / When Doing is Saying, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, FR
Mother Tongue, Auckland Art Gallery, NZ
2018 *Relay League*, Art Sonje Centre, Seoul, KR
Relay League, Protocinema at Kunsthalle Tbilisi, Tbilisi, GE
Citizens Band, University Art Gallery, Sewanee / University of Southern Tennessee, US
2017 *Mother Tongue*, Aarhus 2017, European Capital of Culture commission, Aarhus, DK
Angelica Mesiti: Polyphonies, Basis, Frankfurt, DE
Relay League, Griffith University Museum, Melbourne, AU
Angelica Mesiti: Five works, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, AU
Relay League, Artspace Sydney Commissioned project, AU
Tossed by Waves, Anna Schwartz, Melbourne, AU
2015 *The Colour of Saying*, Anna Schwartz Gallery, Sydney, AU
The Colour of Saying, Lilith Performance Studio, Malmö, SE
An Ocean of Air, Galerie Allen, Paris, FR
Angelica Mesiti: The Calling, Walter Phillips Gallery, The Banff Centre, Banff, CA
Angelica Mesiti: Citizens Band, Nikolaj Kunsthal Copenhagen, Copenhagen, DK
2014 *Angelica Mesiti: Citizens Band*, Williams College Museum of Art, Massachusetts, US
Angelica Mesiti: Citizens Band, Musée d'Art Contemporain de Montréal, CA
The Calling, Ian Potter moving image commission, ACMI Melbourne, Melbourne, AU
2012 *Rapture (silent anthem)*, Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane, AU
The Line of Lode and Death of Charlie Day, 24HR Art Northern Territory Centre for Contemporary Art, Parap, AU
2011 *The Begin-Again*, C3West Project Commission Par The Museum of Contemporary Art Sydney and Hurstville City Council, Sydney, AU
2010 *Rapture (silent anthem)*, Centre for Contemporary Photography (projection window), Melbourne, AU
Natural History, Gallery 9, Sydney, AU
Heritage Park, Heritage Week Film Commission, Campbelltown Arts Centre, Campbelltown, AU
2009 *The Line of Lode and Death of Charlie Day*, Dubbo Regional Gallery, Dubbo, AU
2008 *The Line of Lode and Death of Charlie Day*, Broken Hill Regional Gallery, Broken Hill, AU
2003 *The Rockets Red Glare*, Mori Gallery, Sydney, AU

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2026 *Passer d'un rêve à l'autre / To pass from one dream to another*, 18e Biennale d'Art Contemporain de Lyon, Lyon, FR
Arrow of the Wind: On Artists and Healers, Survival Kit 17, Riga, LV
Sydney Film Festival, Sydney, AU
Beyond Words, Our Voices, SODA Museum, Hwaseong City / Maehangri Peace Memorial Hall, Hwaseong, KR
A Million Silver Bamboo: The Rain We Share, Ewha Media Art Presentation, Ewha Womans University, Seoul, KR
Yebisu International Festival for Art & Alternative Visions, Tokyo Photographic Art Museum, Tokyo, JP
- 2025 *These Entanglements: Ecology After Nature*, The University of Queensland Art Museum, St Lucia, AU
EXPERIENCE POMMERY #18, Mélodies en sous-sol, Domaine Vranken Pommery, Reims, FR
Videonale, biennale, Bonn, DE
Fête, une expérience intérieure, Lille 3000, Gare Saint-Sauveur, Lille, FR
Nouveau printemps, festival, Toulouse, FR
Rencontres Internationales, Loods6, Amsterdam, NL
Pure intention, Singapore Biennale, Singapore, SG
Fiction of Plants, Photo Arsenal Wien, Vienna AU
- 2024 *Sky Gazing*, ARoS AARHUS KUNSTMUSEUM, Aarhus, DK
Science/Fiction — Une non-histoire des Plantes, Maison Européenne de la Photographie, Paris, FR
Peace More Real, Galerie Allen, Paris, FR
Prosodic Grains, BY ART MATTERS, CN
Je ne suis pas toujours là où je crois être, Présentation des étudiants des Beaux-Arts de Paris, Louvre, Paris, FR
CRUELLA DE-VIL, Galerie Sultana, Paris, FR
A New Sense of the Shared World, Daejeon Museum of Art, Dajeon, KR
- 2023 *Portrait 23 : Identity*, National Portrait Gallery of Australia, Canberra
The Court Ballet, NUCRE Rassegna di Arte Contemporanea, Municipality of Ceglie Messapica, IT
Echos d'une collection – Œuvres du Frac Franche-Comté, 1ère Biennale du Son, Le Manoir de la ville de Marigny, Valais, CH
The recent, Talbot Rice Gallery, Edinburgh, Scotland, UK
The Part In The Story Where Our Accumulating Dust Becomes A Mountain, SeMA, Seoul, KR
Festival Côté Court, Pantin, FR
Partenariat Mondes Nouveaux et les Beaux-Arts de Paris, exposition de groupe des étudiants de l'Atelier Mesiti et publication d'un vinyl, FR
- 2022 *Projection croisée Misia Films & Atelier Xavier Veilhan*, cinéma Le Brady, Paris, FR
La Fabrique du Nous #1, Des voix traversées, Institut d'Art Contemporain Villeurbanne / Rhône-Alpes, FR
Les échos d'un temps lointain arrivent en sifflant sur le sable, Poush, Aubervilliers, FR
INTERSTICES: TURNS #3, Galerie Allen, Paris, FR
Aller contre le vent, FRAC Franche-Comté, Besançon, FR
- 2021 *The Musical Brain*, Highline Art, New York, USA
Borås Art Biennale: Deep Listening for Longing, Borås Art Museum, SE
- 2020 *Books at an Exhibition. An Exhibition in Ten Chapters*, Busan Biennale, KR
Force of Listening, Art Maebashi, JP
The Blue Peal Of Bells, Museum of Contemporary Art Busan, KR
The Future of Silence: When your tongue vanishes, Nam Juin Paik Art Center, Seoul, KR
Points of Light, MAC Montreal, Montreal, CA
- 2019 *Australia. Antipodean Stories*, PAC Milano, Milan, IT
Time Cubism, Gwangju Museum of Art, Gwangju, KR
Atelier e Progetti, Museo d'arte contemporanea di Roma, MACRO, Rome, IT
Here We Meet, Kadist San Francisco, USA
- 2018 *Moving Stones*, Kadist, Paris, FR
Balance of Non-Sculpting, Changwon International Sculpture Biennale, KOR
Dark MoFo Festival, Hobart AU
Here We Meet, The Galaxy Museum of Contemporary Art, Chongqing, CN
Adelaide Biennale of Australian Art: Divided Worlds, Samstag Museum, Adelaide, AU
DO DISTURB, Festival of Live Art, with Uriel Barthélémi, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, FR
- 2017 *Sugar Spin: You, Me, Art and Everything*, QAGOMA, Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, AU
Moving Histories: Future Projections, dLux, AU
ART-O-RAMA, Galerie Allen, Marseille, FR
Playlist, cur. Fabien Danesi, Ange Leccia Art Cetnre, Oletta, Corsica, FR
The Score, cur. Jacqueline Doughty, Ian Potter Museum of Art, Melbourne, AU
Aarhus 2017, European Capital of Culture, Commission project, DK
Point Triple de la Matière, Fondation Fiminco, Romainville, FR
Rock the Kasbah, Institut des Cultures d'Islam, Paris, FR
- 2016 *Rebel Rebel*, Musée des Arts Contemporains au Grand-Hornu, BE
Prix Meurice for Contemporary Art, Finalist exhibition, Hôtel Meurice, Paris, FR

- Unlisted*, Icebox Project Space Philadelphia, US
Telling Tales, Cur. Rachel Kent, Museum of Contemporary Art Sydney, AU
LOVE...more than a four letter word, Caboolture Regional Art Gallery, Queensland, AU
Static & Silence, The Lock-Up Galery, Newcastle, NSW, AU
Chantiers d'Europe, festival Par Théâtres de la Ville de Paris, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, FR
Invention, Memory and Places, Musée de la Chartreuse, Duai, FR
Spirit Your Mind, Cur. Isabelle Kowal, Marie Maertens & Anissa Touati, Chalet Society, Art Basel, Miami, US
Hacking Habitat. Art of Control, Old Prison, Wolvenhoekplein, Utrecht NL
- 2015 *Station to Station: Project*, by Doug Aitken, Barbican Gallery, London, UK
Spirit Your Mind, Cur. Isabelle Kowal, Marie Maertens & Anissa Touati, Chalet Society, Art Basel, Miami, US
24 Frames Per Second, Carriageworks, Sydney, AU
Tu dois changer ta vie!, Lille 3000: Renaissance, Tri Postal, Lille, FR
Nuit Blanche, Paris, FR
Light Moves, Festival of Screendance, Limerick Ireland
Cosmic Love Wanderlust: The Imperial Slacks Project, Campbelltown Arts Centre, Sydney College of the Arts gallery, AU
People Like Us, UNSW Galleries, Sydney, AU
- 2014 *The Immigration Songs: Angelica Mesiti and Malik Nejmi*, MAXXI, Rome, IT
Open Museum/Open City, MAXXI, Rome, IT
Sights and Sounds: Global Film and Video, The Jewish Museum, New York, US
No Sound is Innocent, Marabouparken Konsthall, Stockholm, SE
You Imagine What You Desire, 19th Biennale of Sydney, Sydney, AU
The Australian Club, Melbourne, AU
Transcendence: Nell, Angelica Mesiti, Aura Satz, Gertrude Contemporary, Melbourne, AU
IMPACT, Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth, AU
- 2013 *Everyday Magic*, Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, AU
Turns – Possibilities of Performance, Galerie Allen, Paris, FR
Mom, am I Barbarian?, 13th Istanbul Biennial, Istanbul, TR
Seven Points (part two), Embassy of Australia, United States of America, Washington DC, US
Buyuhyn-wana: The transformative persona, Lismore Regional Gallery, AU
Awakening Where are We Standing? Earth, Memory and Resurrection, Aichi Triennial, Nagoya, JP
If you were to live here... The 5th Auckland Triennial, Auckland, NZ
Guirguis New Art Prize 2013, University of Ballarat Post Office Gallery, Art Gallery, Ballarat, AU
Rendez-vous 13, Institut d'art contemporain Villeurbanne/Rhône-Alpes, Lyon, FR
Sharjah Biennale 11, Cur. Yuko Hasegawa, Sharjah, UAE
We Used to Talk About Love, Balnaves Contemporary Art Gallery of NSW, Sydney, AU
The space between us: Anne Landa Award for video and new media 2013, Art Gallery of NSW, Sydney, AU
Seven Points (part one), Embassy of Australia Gallery, Washington DC, US
- 2012 *1st Kochi-Mizuris Biennale*, Kerala, IN
Montevideo Biennial: El Gran Sur, cur. Alfons Hug, Montevideo, UY
TarraWarra Biennial: Sonic Spheres, cur Victoria Lynn, TarraWarra Museum of Art, TarraWarra, AU
NEW12, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, AU
Volume One: MCA Collection (permanent display), Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, AU
- 2011 *17th International Contemporary Art Festival SESC Videobrasil: Southern Panoramas*, Sao Paulo, BR
London Australia Film Festival (Artists Film program) The Barbican Art Centre, London, UK
Videonale 13: Festival for Contemporary Video Art, Kunstmuseum Bonn, Bonn, DE
South by Southeast; Recent Video from Australia and New Zealand, 3rd Yebisu International Festival for Art and Alternative Visions, Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography, Tokyo, JP
Selectively Revealed, Aram Art Gallery, Goyang, Seoul, KR
- 2010 *Rencontres Internationales Paris/Berlin/Madrid*, Centre Pompidou (Paris, France); Auditorium of the Ministerio de Cultura (Madrid, Spain); Haus der Kulturen der Welt (Berlin, Germany); FR, ES, DE
No Soul For Sale, Tate Modern, London, UK
Move on Asia, Loop Gallery Seoul Korea, LABoral, Gijon, ES
Experimenta Utopia Now; Biennale of Media Art, Federation Square Melbourne, Carriageworks Sydney, Museum of Old and New Art Tasmania, AU
Nightshifters; Liveworks Festival, Performance Space Carriageworks, Sydney, AU
Hardbodies, Hazelhurst Regional Gallery and Arts Centre, Gympie, AU
Time and Space, Hazelhurst Regional Gallery and Arts Centre, Gympie, AU
- 2009 *58th Blake Prize (winner)*, NAS Gallery, Sydney, AU
Helen Lempriere Travelling Art Scholarship: Finalist Exhibition, Artspace, Sydney, AU
VAD International Video and Digital Arts Festival, Girona, ES
Souvenirs from Earth, TV Channel for Contemporary Art, DE and FR
Les Rencontres Internationales Berlin/Madrid, Haus der Kulturen der Welt (Berlin, Germany), Reina Sofia National Museum (Madrid, Spain), DE and ES

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- Loop 09*, Video Art festival, Barcelona, ES
- Event; New Moving Image Works*, Artspace, Sydney, AU
- Australia?* Mildura Arts Centre, Mildura, AU
- dTour/08-09*, d.Lux media Arts Regional touring exhibition
- 2008 *Les Rencontres Internationales*, Ecole Des Beaux Arts, Paris, FR
- National Film and Sound Archive's Big Screen 08*, Broken Hill Regional Gallery, Broken Hill, AU
- Loop 08*, Video Art festival, Barcelona, ES
- Face to Face*, Australian regional touring exhibition, AU
- 2007 *Five x Five*, Ivan Doherty Gallery, Sydney, AU
- 2006 *Game On*, Next Wave Festival, Melbourne, AU
- Play: Portraiture and Performance in Recent Video Art from Australia and New Zealand*, Adam Art Gallery New Zealand and Perth Institute of Contemporary Art, NZ
- 2005 *O.K Video Festival*, National Gallery of Indonesia, Jakarta, ID
- 2004 *Video Spell 4: Cartographies*, The Performance Space, Sydney, AU
- Work Rest Play (Escape)*, Imperial Slacks Collective, Artspace, Sydney, AU
- 720 x 576 Ate*, Phatspace, Sydney, AU
- 2003 *Sidney Kahn Summer Institute*, The Kitchen, New York, USA
- 2002 *Desk Job*, Mori Gallery, Sydney, AU
- Video, Film, Sound*, Scott Donovan Gallery, Sydney, AU
- Broken Hotel*, Tour dLux, Broken Hill, AU
- Projekt Issue 2*, Kings ARI Melbourne, AU
- Positive Overkill*, Imperial Slacks Gallery, Surry Hills, AU

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Artbank, Australia
Art Gallery of Western Australia, Australia
Auckland Art Gallery, Toi o Tamaki, New-Zealand
Australia Art Gallery of New South Wales, Australia
Australian Centre for the Moving Image, Australia
Benala Art Gallery, Australia
Centre National des Arts Plastiques (CNAP), France
Deutsche Bank Global Art Program, Germany
Fond Regional d'Art Contemporain (FRAC) Bourgogne, France
Fond Regional d'Art Contemporain (FRAC) Franche-Comté, France
Geelong Art Gallery, Australia
Kadist Art Foundation, France / USA.
Monash University Museum of Art, Australia
MAC Montréal (Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal), Canada
Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, Australia
Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Korea, South Korea
National Gallery of Australia, Australia
Newcastle Art Gallery, Australia
Queensland Art Gallery of Modern Art, Australia
TarraWarra Art Museum, Australia
The Chartwell Collection, New-Zealand
UQ Art Museum, The University of Queensland, Australia
Western Plains Cultural Centre, Australia

PRIZES / GRANTS / RESIDENCIES / COMMISSIONS

- 2025 Geneva magazine n°66, Museum of Art and History, invited artist
- 2024 TANK commission series, Art Gallery of New South Wales
- Commissioned film, Mire Artistic Program, Geneva
- 2023 Commissioned film for the series BY NIGHT by Misia Films and Galerie Lafayette, Paris
- 2019 Winner of the 2019 Advance Award for the Arts
- Cheffe d'Atelier, Beaux-Arts, Paris
- Pavillon australien, 58e Biennale di Venezia, Venice
- 2018-21 WW1 Centenary Artists commissions, Australian War Memorial, Canberra
- 2017 Artspace – commande d'une nouvelle œuvre
- 2016 Residency with Centre Nationale de la Danse (CND), Pantin, France

- Aarhus Capitale européenne de la culture 2017 - commande d'une nouvelle œuvre
Shortlisted for the 9th edition of the Meurice Prize for contemporary art
2015 Australia Council for the Arts – dotation pour la création d'une nouvelle œuvre
2013 Anne Landa Award for Video and New Media Arts
The Ian Potter Moving Image Commission
2011 AFTRS Creative Fellowship Award
Arts NSW Quick Response Project Funding
2010 Sydney Underground Film Festival (Jury Award)
2009 58th Blake Prize for Religious and Spiritual Art
Australia Council for the Arts, new work grant
Cité International des Arts residency (University of New South Wales studio)
Ian Potter Foundation Travel Grant
2008 Nava Marketing Scheme Grant
2007-09 University Post Graduate Scholarship, UNSW
2002 RUN_WAY Young and Emerging Artists Initiative, Australia Council

MONOGRAPHS

Angelica Mesiti / In the round. Édité par Tessa Giblin, Melissa MacRobert. Publié par Talbot Rice Gallery Editions en partenariat avec Edinburgh University Press. ISBN 978-1-83812325-3, 2022

Angelica Mesiti ASSEMBLY, Directrice éditoriale : Juliana Engberg. Publié par The Australia Council for the Australian Pavilion 58th Venice Biennale. ISBN 978-86257-001-6, 2019

Angelica Mesiti '*Quand faire c'est dire*' Palais de Tokyo. Publié par Les presses du réel. ISBN 978-2-37896-084-1, 2019

A Communion of Stranger Gestures

Édité par Alexie Glass-Kantor et Talia Linz. Publié par Schwartz City et Artspace. ISBN 9781760640149, 2017

Angelica Mesiti: The Calling. Ian Potter Moving Image Commission. Publié par The Australian Centre for the Moving Image. ISBN 9781920805197, 2016

SELECTED PRESS

- 2025 Vitamin V: Video and the Moving Image in Contemporary Art, Phaidon Press, 2025
2024 Dee Jefferson, "Angelica Mesiti's The Rites of When: a ravishing, immersive work that approaches the sublime", *The Guardian*, September 2024
Joanna Mendelsohn, "Angelica Mesiti's The Rites of When finally makes sense of the Art Gallery of NSW's Tank. It is worth the plane flight", *The Conversation*, September 2024
Georgia Hope, "When the time seems rite for renewal", *The Australian*, September 2024
Alex Mitchell, "Stars and solstice rite stuff of major art exhibition", *Camden Haven Courier*, September 2024
Melissa Peša, "Angelica Mesiti. The Rites of When", *Art Almanac*, September 2024
"Angelica Mesiti .The Rites of When", *Australian Arts Review*, September 2024
2022 D.N. Rodowick, "Angelica Mesiti's World Citizens", *October* 181, #181, été 2022
2019 Dee Jefferson, "Australian pavilion at Venice Biennale will house poetic of pluralist, democratic society", *ABC News*, March 2019
Celine Garcia-Carré, "Portrait", *L'Oeil*, Mai 2019
Jean-Marie Wynants, "Angelica Mesiti, au-delà des mots", *Le Soir*, Avril 2019
Maxime Der Nahabédian, "Angelica Mesiti, Quand faire c'est dire", *Say Who*, Février 2019
Guillaume Benoit, "Angelica Mesiti - Palais de Tokyo", *Slash*, March 2019
Linda Morris, "Visual artist Angelica Mesiti puts unity into art for her Venice debut", *The Age*, March 2019
Andrew Bock, "Angelica Mesiti finds poetry in motion pictures for Venice Biennale", *The Sydney Morning Herald*, Mai 2019
Diane Nazaroff "UNSW alumna's Venice Biennale entry examines the collective power of « the people »", *UNSW Sydney Newsroom*, 2019
Hettie Judah, "Meet the women taking center stage at the Venice Biennale in 2019", *Vogue Australia*, Mai 2019
"Quand faire c'est dire", *Parisart*, Mars 2019
Roxana Azimi, "La Biennale de Venise, un accélérateur de cote pour les artistes", *Le Monde*, Mai 2019
2018 Alexie Glass-Kantor and Haeju Kim, "Angelica Mesiti in Conversation", *Ocula*, 1 Février 2018
Coly Delistraty, "Emerging artists to watch this year", *Modern Painter Magazine*, Janvier-Février 2018
Tom Jeffreys, "How we speak", *Frieze* #192, Janvier-Février 2018

- 2017 Claudia Arozqueta, "Angelica Mesiti: ArtSpace, Sydney," Critic's Pick in *Artforum*, Juin 2017
Craig Judd, "Review- Angelica Mesiti: Relay League," *Artlink*, 22 Juin 2017
Christopher Allen, "Angelica Mesiti: message received at Anna Schwartz and Artspace galleries," *The Australian*, 17 Juin 2017
Steve Dow, "Angelica Mesiti communicates via multiple sense in Relay League," *Art Guide Australia*, 18 Mai 2017
Emerald Dunn Frost, "Hand-Drawn Review: Relay League at ArtSpace," *FBI Radio*, 16 Mai 2017
Katya Wachtel, "Angelica Mesiti in Paris," *Vault Australasian Art & Culture*, Mai 2017
Lauren Carroll Harris, "Angelica Mesiti recodes video art," *Real Time Arts* #138, Avril - Mai 2017
Emmanuelle Jardonnet, "Nos cinq choix culturels pour le week-end," *Le Monde*, 17 March 2017
- 2016 "Six artistes sélectionnés pour le Prix Meurice," *Le Quotidien de L'Art* #1093, 24 Juin 2016, p. 7
- 2015 Judicaël Lavrador, "Tu dois changer ta vie!" *Beaux Arts Magazine*, Octobre 2015.
Toni Ross, "Review: Angelica Mesiti, Anna Schwartz Gallery Sydney", *Artforum*, Vol 54, no.1, Septembre 2015, pp 405.
Maryse Morin, "Angelica Mesiti, Citizens Band...Le sens de ce qui circule entre nous", *ETC Media, Revue D'Arts Mediatiques*. 15 Février - 15 Juin 2015. pp 62-63.
Clarissa Sebag-Montefiore, "Angelica Mesiti: the artist who records a choir in song without a single sound" *The Guardian*, Friday 8 Mai 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2015/Mai/08/angelica-mesiti-artist-interview-sydney>
Nicholas Forrest, *Why Angelica Mesiti's "Colour of Saying" Will Stop You Dead*, BlouinArtinfo 19th Mai, 2015
Andrew Taylor "Angelica Mesiti explores silence in new video work at Anna Schwartz Gallery" *The Sydney Morning Herald*, Avril 14th 2015
Christopher Allen, *REVIEW: Carriageworks, Sydney: 24 Frames per Second*,
- 2014 Christopher Allen, "Lend Angelica Mesiti your ears", *The Australian*, 17th Mai 2014, pp.10-11.
Robert Nelson, "Calling attention to ancient languages: The Calling Par Angelica Mesiti", *The Age*, 12 Février 2014 . <http://www.theage.com.au/entertainment/art-and-design/angelica-mesiti-hearkens-to-whistling-language-in-the-calling-at-acmi-20140211-32fv0.html>
- 2013 Fabrice Bousteau *Offensive Indienne*, *Beaux Arts Magazine*; fev2013, Issue 344, p22
Columbus, Nicki (Ed), *Re:Emerge, Towards a new cultural cartography, Sharjah Biennial 11* exhibition catalogue, (Sharjah: Sharjah Art Foundation, 2013)
Jacqueline Millner, "<<The more global one is, the more local one desires to become>> Angelica Mesiti: Being World", *Contemporary Art + Culture Broadsheet*, Issue 42.2, 2013, pp.104-107
Dan Rule, 'Fragments of Cinema Angelica Mesiti's Poetic Video Works Embrace and Subvert the Cinematic Device' *Vault*, Issue 3, Avril
Rosa Gubay, 'Art R&R: The 5th Auckland Triennial', *Gather & Hunter*
Nicholas Forrest, 'Is Angelica Mesiti Australia's Most Popular Contemporary Artist?', *Blouin ArtInfo*, Avril 10
Audrey Hoffer, 'Australian Embassy Aims to Dispel Down Under Cliches', *The Washington Diplomat*, Avril 1
Christopher Allen, 'Wide of the Heart', *The Weekend Australian Review*, Février 23
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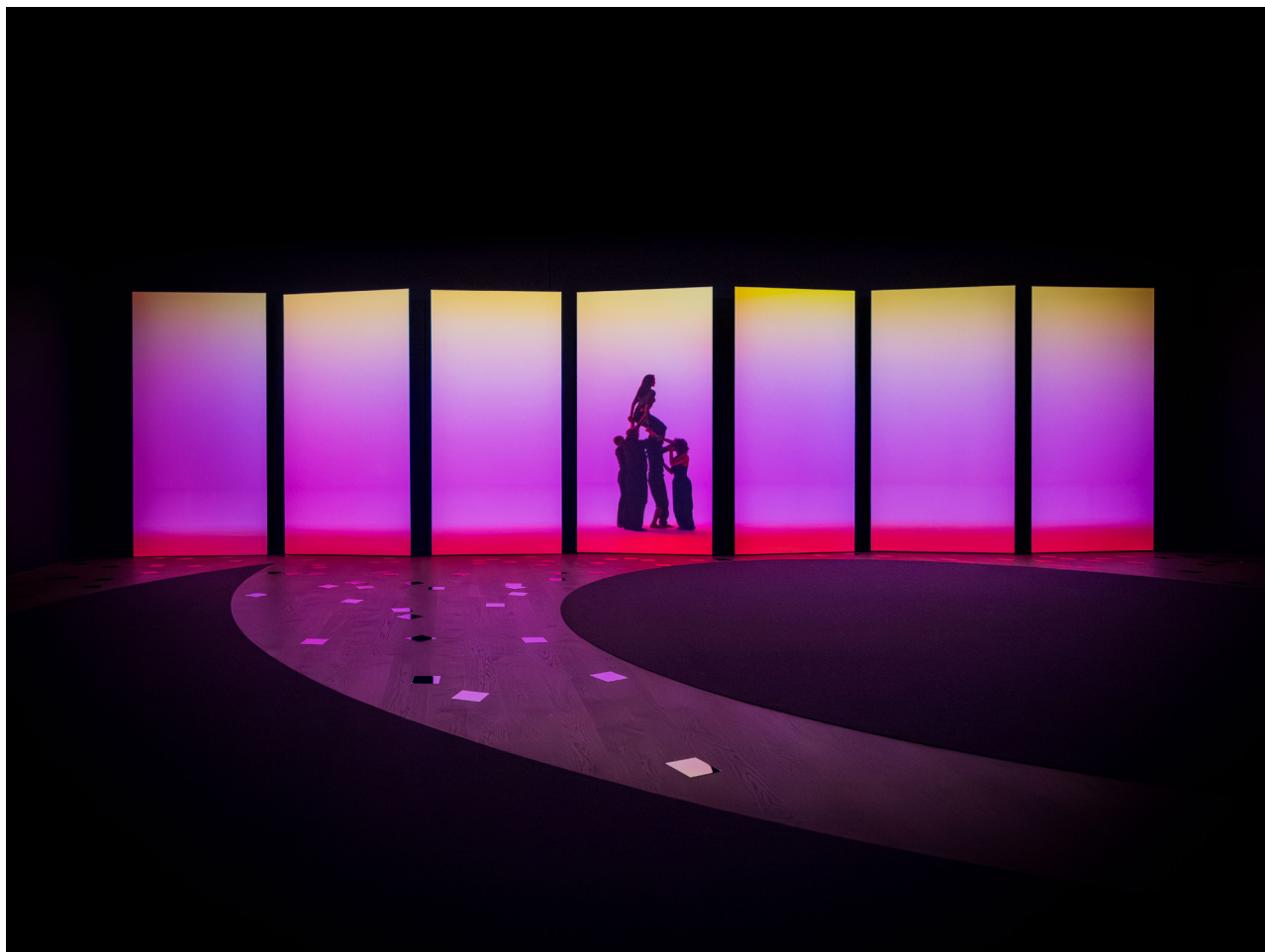
ANGELICA MESITI

Exhibition view *Yebisu International Festival for Art & Alternative Visions*, Tokyo Photographic Art Museum, Tokyo, JP

The Rites of When, 2024

Single channel video, colour, sound

30 minutes



ANGELICA MESITI

Exhibition view *Reverb*, Tinguely Museum, Basel, CH

The Rites of When, 2024

7-channel digital video installation, colour, sound

30 minutes



ANGELICA MESITI

Exhibition view *Reverb*, Tinguely Museum, Basel, CH

Sidereal, 2024

High definition colour video, 8:9, stereo sound
7 minutes



ANGELICA MESITI

Exhibition view *Nouveau printemps*, 2025, Toulouse

Mother Tongue, 2017
2 channel video installation
18 minutes



ANGELICA MESITI

Exhibition view *Nouveau printemps*, 2025, Toulouse

Mother Tongue, 2017
2 channel video installation
18 minutes



ANGELICA MESITI

Exhibition view *Acoustic Lights*, 2025

Galerie Allen, Paris, FR



ANGELICA MESITI

Exhibition view *EXPERIENCE POMMERY #18*, *Méodies en sous-sol*, 2025, Domaine Vranken Pommery, Reims

Sideréal, 2024

High definition colour video, 8:9, stereo sound
7 minutes



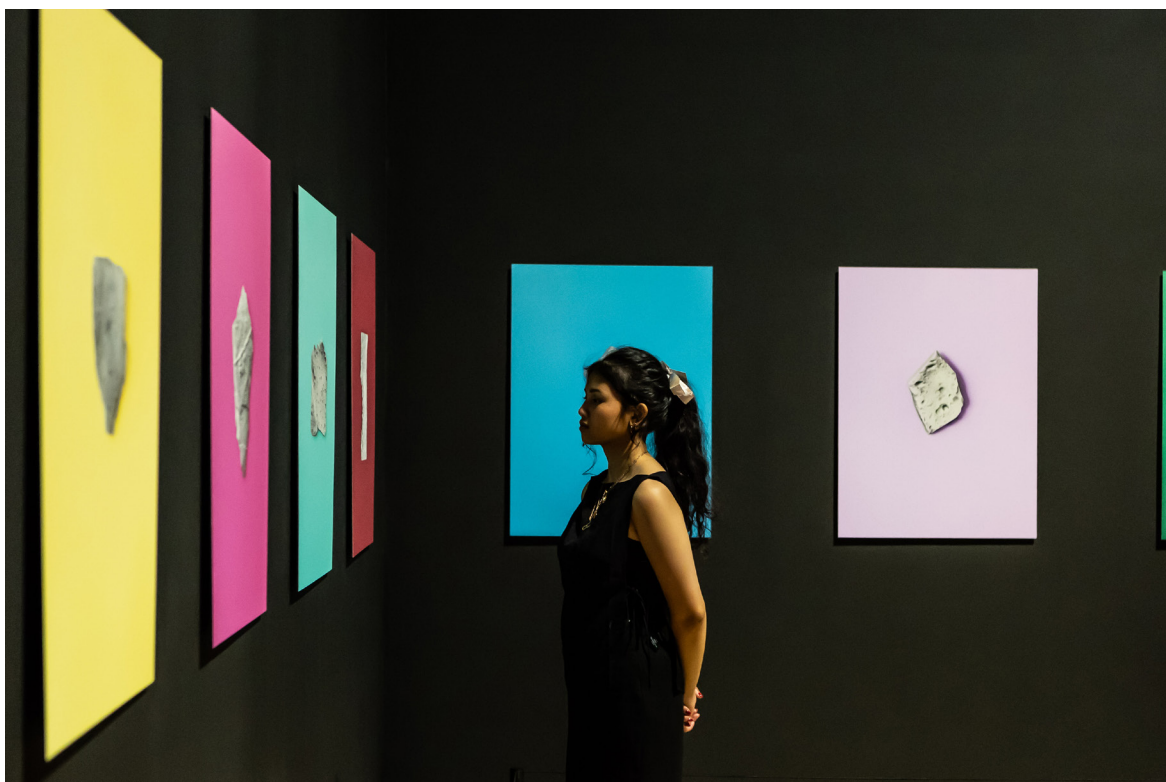
ANGELICA MESITI

Exhibition view *The Rites of When*, 2024, Art Gallery of New South Wales
7-channel digital video installation, colour, sound
30 minutes
Edition de 5 ex + 2 AP
Art Gallery of New South Wales, Jenni Carter



ANGELICA MESITI

Vue de l'exposition, *The recent*, Talbot Rice Gallery, Edinburgh, Scotland, UK
Future Perfect Continuous, 2022, Vidéo HD, 16:9. Noir et blanc, son 5:1.
8 minutes
Edition de 3 ex + 2 AP



ANGELICA MESITI

Vue de l'exposition, *The recent*, Talbot Rice Gallery, Edinburgh, Scotland, UK
The rain that fell in the faint light of the young Sun, 2022
Tirages photographiques d'archives sur aluminium, 85 x 63 cm
Edition de 5 ex + 2 AP



ANGELICA MESITI

Vue de l'exposition, *In the Round*, Talbot Rice Gallery, Edinburgh

Over the Air and Underground, 2021

Vidéo à cinq canaux, 10 canaux audio mono 9 minutes

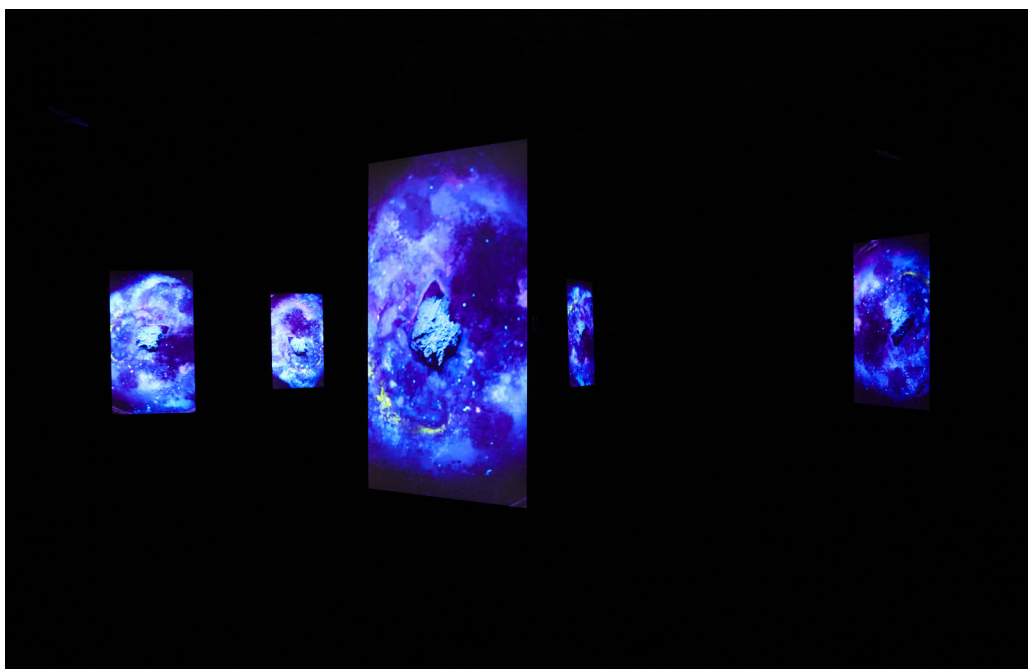
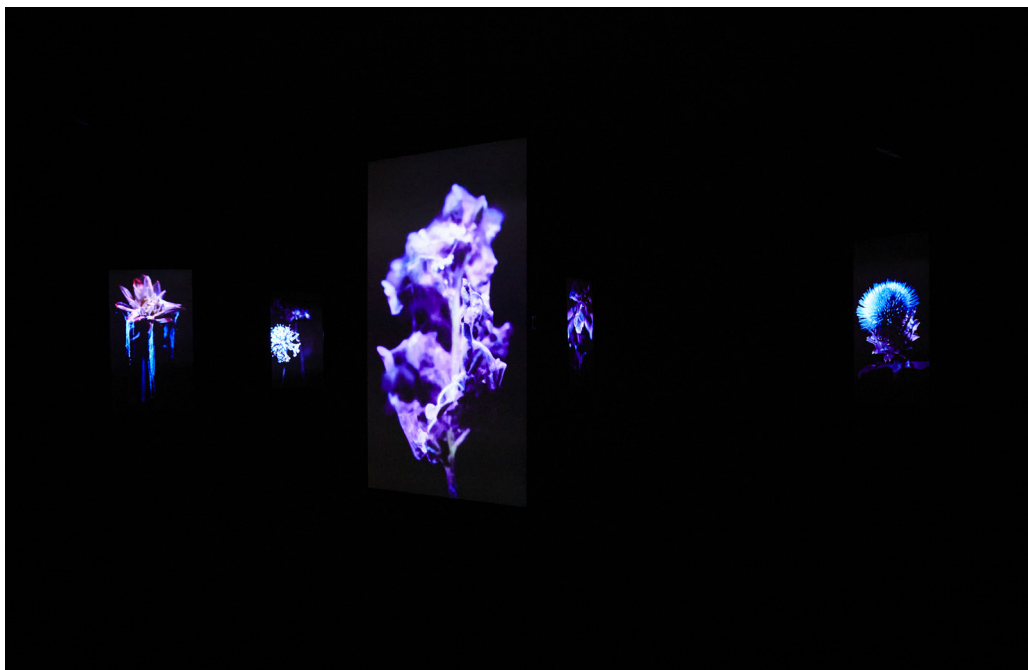


ANGELICA MESITI

Vue de l'exposition, *Angelica Mesiti*, Galerie Allen, Paris

Over the Air and Underground, 2021

Vidéo à cinq canaux, 10 canaux audio mono 9 minutes



ANGELICA MESITI

Vue d'exposition, *Busan Biennale 2020*, Books at an Exhibition.
An Exhibition in Ten Chapters
Commissaire d'exposition Jacob Fabricius
Museum of Contemporary Art Busan, Yeongdo,
Old Town in Busan City



ANGELICA MESITI

Vue d'exposition *Quand faire c'est dire*, 2019, Palais de Tokyo, Paris
Commissaire d'exposition Daria De Beauvais
Courtoisie de l'artiste et de la Galerie Allen, Paris
Photo: Aurélien Mole



ANGELICA MESITI

Vue d'exposition *Quand faire c'est dire*, 2019, Palais de Tokyo, Paris
Commissaire d'exposition Daria De Beauvais
Courtoisie de l'artiste et de la Galerie Allen, Paris
Photo: Aurélien Mole



ANGELICA MESITI

ASSEMBLY, 2019 - La Biennale di Venezia

3 canaux installation vidéo dans un amphithéâtre architectural, HD projections vidéo, couleur, six-canaux son
25 min

Dimensions variables

Courtoisie de l'artiste et de la Galerie Allen, Paris

Commission par the Australia Council for the Arts à l'occasion de la 58ème International Art Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia



ANGELICA MESITI

Relay League, 2017

Vidéo numérique haute définition triple canaux, son
23 mins 42 secs

Video still / Vue d'exposition, Artspace, Sydney, Australia



ANGELICA MESITI

Nakh Removed, 2015

Vidéo, sans son

9 mins

Production still. Photo: Pierre Jouvion

Commission par Carriageworks dans le cadre du projet 24 Frames Per Second



ANGELICA MESITI

The Colour of Saying, 2015

Haut: performance. Photo: Lilith Performance Studio

Bas: 3 canaux haute définition vidéo numérique, son. 25 mins.

Vue d'exposition Anna Schwartz Gallery Sydney. Photo: Glen Thompson.

La performance a été créée en collaboration et produit par Lilith Performance Studio, Malmö, Suède 2015.



ANGELICA MESITI

Citizens Band, 2012

4 channel vidéo installation, HD vidéo, 16:9, PAL, son surround
21 mins 25 secs

Haut: Production still. Photo: Bonnie Elliott

Bas: Vue d'exposition. NEW12, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne.

Commission par the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne. Assisté par the Australian Government à travers the Australian Council.



ANGELICA MESITI

The Calling, 2013-2014

3 channel vidéo installation, video numérique, son

35 mins 36 secs

Haut: video still

Bas: Vue d'exposition Australian Centre for Moving Image

Commission par the Ian Potter Moving Image Commission, présentée par ACMI



ANGELICA MESITI

In the Ear of the Tyrant, 2014

Multi-channel haute definition vidéo installation, son surround

5 mins 10 secs

Haut: Production still. . Photo: Sebastian Kriete

Bas: Vue d'exposition. 19th Biennale of Sydney, Art Gallery of NSW. Photo: Sebastian Kriete.

Commission par the 19th Biennale of Sydney, financé par The Australia Council for the Arts and Craft.



ANGELICA MESITI

Prepared Piano for Movers (Hausmann) (video still), 2012
Haute definition vidéo, 9:16, couleur, son stereo
5 mins 32 sec



ANGELICA MESITI

In the Mouth of the Tyrant, 2015

Vidéo, 16:9, haute definition, couleur, sans son

9 mins

Video still.



ANGELICA MESITI

The Begin Again, 2011

4 vidéos monocanal, vidéo haute définition, son stéréo et installation et performance en direct

Vue d'expositions

Photo: Jamie North

Commission par C3West pour le Museum of Contemporary Art Sydney et le Hurstville City Council



ANGELICA MESITI

Rapture (silent anthem), 2009
Vidéo haute-définition, sans son
10 mins 10 secs
Video still

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PRESS



Exhibitions
Preview

Angelica Mesiti's first major solo show in Australia explores humans' connection to the cosmos

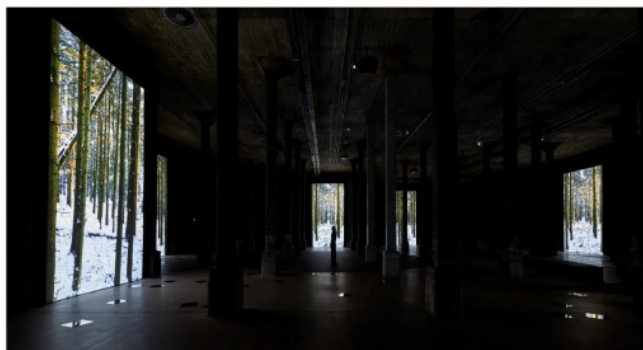
Work has been commissioned for the Tank, a former oil reservoir beneath Sydney's Art Gallery of New South Wales



Tim Stone

24 September 2024

Share



Installation view of Angelica Mesiti's *The Rites of When* (2024), commissioned by the Art Gallery of New South Wales for the Nelson Packer Tank
© Angelica Mesiti, photo © Art Gallery of New South Wales, Jenni Carter

The Tank, a cavernous gallery in a former oil reservoir below the Art Gallery of New South Wales (AGNSW), is the setting for a monumental new work by the Sydney-born artist Angelica Mesiti that seeks to realign our connection to the cosmos.

In the two years since it opened, the Tank has been the backdrop to speculative ruins from an imagined future in Adrián Villar Rojas's *The End of Imagination*, stood in for Louise Bourgeois's subconscious in the late artist's retrospective *Has the Day Invaded the Night or Has the Night Invaded the Day?* and hosted the headliners André 3000 and Solange as part of the gallery's Volume music festival.

Now the Tank will form the backdrop to Mesiti's *The Rites of When*, an immersive multi-screen installation that is the Paris-based artist's first major solo exhibition in Australia.

While in appearance the Tank is just about as far from a conventional gallery space as you can get, the idea that a white box is neutral "is nonsense", says AGNSW curator Justin Paton. With its entrance a modest stairwell on the bottom floor of the museum, the Tank is like "a secret in the basement", Paton says, citing visitors to the Bourgeois retrospective who emerged "fully satisfied" from the well-lit gallery spaces above only to discover the exhibition continued in the Tank. "In a way, the qualities of surprise and discovery are mediums that the artist gets to work with," he says.



Angelica Mesiti, *The Rites of When* (2024)
© Angelica Mesiti, photo © Art Gallery of New South Wales, Jenni Carter

Although the global pandemic has mostly disappeared from daily news cycles, its impact overshadowed the first two Tank commissions. Australia's closed borders forced Villar Rojas, who usually works site-specifically, to develop sculptures in the virtual realm, construct them at his studio in Argentina and then ship them to Sydney ahead of the opening in 2022.

For Mesiti, who moved from Paris to the French countryside as Europe's first lockdown loomed, a pandemic inspired "tree-change" at the start of spring brought into sharp focus the widening gap between humans and the environment—a central theme of *The Rites of When*. "The natural world was bursting with life, while the human species was experiencing a kind of dormancy, death and illness," Mesiti tells *The Art Newspaper*.

Immersed in a tight-knit agricultural community, where local farmers shared pruning advice and the night sky was filled with stars, "the thread of the work seems to come together", says Beatrice Galton, AGNSW's senior curator of contemporary Australian art.

According to Galton, Mesiti has a gift for "noticing the beauty and poetry" in ordinary acts, and in *The Rites of When* she is presenting "new rituals, new ways of doing things that coincide with the seasonal harvests".

Although *The Rites of When* unfolds across multiple screens, as did *Assembly*, Mesiti's offering at the 2019 Venice Biennale, the Tank commission "called for me to work differently", Mesiti says. And not just in response to the parameters of the space, which has "no unobstructed sight lines" and is "longer than being inside a cathedral or deep cave", she says.

Instead of Mesiti's trademark observational approach, for the Tank commission she collaborated with the choreographer Filipe Lourenço to create sequences with performers that reflect our "close connection to the natural world", she says. Composed of two distinct movements representing the winter and summer solstices, *The Rites of When* builds in intensity as performers mark dawn, dusk and the passing of the seasons and celebrate the longest and shortest days of the year. But while the work might be inspired by age-old rituals, Mesiti says she is also questioning if that human connection to the natural environment is still present, and "if not, could it be?".

Galton says Mesiti's desire to "embrace the risk" of working with the Tank has been "hugely exciting". "She's the only person who can imagine how this thing is going to behave over seven screens in this enormous space," Galton adds.

• [Angelica Mesiti: The Rites of When](#) [📍](#), Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 21 September–11 May 2025

Letter from the Editor

It's Spring. The rhythmic algorithms of cover artist John Aslanidis' geometric constructs, pulsating with colour, movement and energy, awaken us from winter's cold slumber and thrust us into the new season; a world of warmth and activity. The flowers are in bloom, the birds are chirping, and the sound of ice cream trucks can be heard in the distance. It's time to step outside and visit the galleries and see the array of wonderful art on show. This issue celebrates the activation of the senses: to see, feel, hear and smell, even taste art, and there's inspiration everywhere.

Melissa Peša

Editor's choice

Angelica Mesiti *The Rites of When*

Art Gallery of New South Wales
21 September 2024 to 11 May 2025
Sydney

Angelica Mesiti's *The Rites of When* is a video and sound installation that reimagines collective and communal rituals in relation to seasonal cycles, at a time of environmental uncertainty and flux.

Mesiti adapts choreography, vocal choruses, instrumentation and collective sound-making, and soaring aerial drone views to re-examine activities familiar to communities who have

deep bonds with seasonal rhythms. Ecstatic celebrations associated with specific moments in the calendar – mid-winter and mid-summer solstices – are played out across seven monolithic screens, interspersed between the exhibiting space's forest of concrete columns, offering a portal into a realm alongside past and present: an imagined alternative.

As cycles of regeneration in nature shift out of sync and we increasingly live in urbanised environments, removed from nature, *The Rites of When* explores the possibilities of inventing new rituals and finding adaptive pathways for connection.



The Rites of When, 2024 (video still), seven-channel digital video installation, colour, sound, approx. 30:00 minutes

Collection of the artist

Commissioned by the Art Gallery of New South Wales for the Tank, 2024

© the artist

Courtesy the artist and Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney

Angelica Mesiti: A hundred years



Still from Angelica Mesiti, *A hundred years*, 2019–2020, single channel video, 21:24 minutes, AWM2019.57.1

The film *A hundred years* is a meditation on the scars and trauma war leaves on the landscape – in particular, the Somme battlefields. Footage of the damaged landscape is combined with music and sounds from nature. Beginning in the dead of winter, the camera follows the return of life in spring, before moving to high summer, with the work climaxing in a musical performance. The penny whistle – one of the few instruments to be played in the trenches of the First World War – is played by a young man who walks in endless circles at the bottom of Lochnagar crater. The crater resulted from a huge mine unleashed by the British on the German front lines on the morning of 1 July 1916, the start of one of the bloodiest days in history. The

crater is now preserved to “honour the fallen of the Great War and of all wars”.

The Western Front is perhaps second only to Gallipoli as a site in Australian public memory of the First World War.

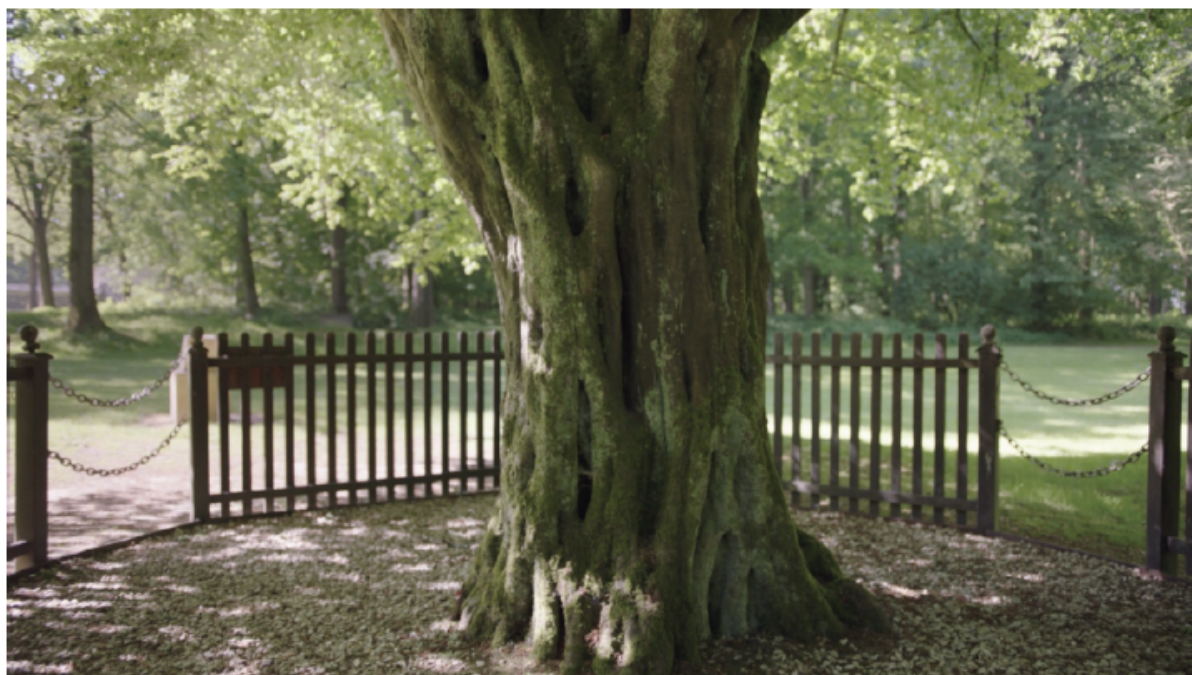
The Australian War Memorial invited acclaimed Paris-based Australian artist Angelica Mesiti to create this work of art in response to the centenary of the First World War. Head of Art at the Memorial, Laura Webster, explained why new works of art are commissioned:

The First World War was such a major event in global history, there were so many impacts and consequences. During its centenary the Memorial art curators really wanted to share artists' perspective on these legacies internationally. Along with commissions from Turkish and New Zealander artists, we wanted a work about the Western Front to broaden our collection and better contextualise the Australian experience, traditionally the focus of our collection. Contemporary art is a way to share new perspectives. Our understanding of history changes, it's never static and it's important to acknowledge and commemorate these events and deepen our understanding over time. Looking back from the present day, we bring new and nuanced ideas to these events and that changes how we can commemorate, especially the shared legacies internationally.

Webster was drawn to Mesiti's work for this commission after seeing her “beautiful, mesmerizing films where she uses cinematic qualities to create connection and empathy”. Renowned for using film in innovative, often nonverbal ways to share stories and explore cultural heritage, Mesiti's approach was shaped by research at the Australian War Memorial and then on the ground on the former battle sites, now the locations of memorials and agricultural land in northern France. Mesiti deliberately avoided filming the architectural memorials and cemeteries dotted throughout the Somme, instead focusing on where damage to the landscape itself was preserved: tracing the paths of the former trenches; the scale of the Lochnagar Crater; and the human limb-like branches of the Last Tree in Delville Wood. What were scenes of devastation have returned to a bucolic landscape, known as the breadbasket of France. For Mesiti:

“What was apparent when I was there was that those landscapes of wheatfields and rolling hills, what you're actually looking at are mass graves – you're looking at landscapes where not everyone was recovered. It is impregnated with the fallen. In that environment, that fact is present in your mind and I wanted to transmit it through the work. That's why music

became integral, to give that tone and feeling that you have while you're there, with that knowledge."



The Last Tree, Delville Wood, still from Angelica Mesiti, *A hundred years*, 2019–2020, single channel video, 21:24 minutes, AWM2019.57.1

Mesiti often features music in her work for its powerful evocation of emotion or atmosphere. The winter scenes are accompanied with a sense of foreboding, evoked by music alluding to the machines of war. The camera focuses our gaze on the Last Tree in Delville Wood. Now regrown, Delville Wood is the South African national memorial, the site of its most devastating losses during the war. The soldiers rest where they fell, with saplings replanted around the only survivor, a hornbeam known as the Last Tree. For Mesiti, it is a powerful symbol, the only living witness of the war.

"A hundred years is a very human timescale, it sits just outside human memory, but if we think about the timescale of a tree it's a very different scope, it shifts human perspective. When you stand there it's hard to imagine the obliteration of a forest in a matter of hours but this tree has somehow survived. So it's a living monument and somehow a living witness to those events."

Filming the tree during the temporary death of winter, and then returning in spring

and at the height of summer captures a sense of progression, from the darkest days of the war to recovery and change, expressing the human will to survive.



Lochnagar Crater, still from Angelica Mesiti, *A hundred years*, 2019–2020, single channel video, 21:24 minutes, AWM2019.57.1

Seeing a small penny whistle on display in a museum collection brought to Mesiti's mind,

“the idea of young men in the trenches with a moment of reprieve, and using music and playing music for each other, as a way of removing themselves from the experience we can't even imagine. I wanted to create a performance using the penny whistle that would be a way of speaking of that reprieve, of humanity that was mixed among what we normally see of the horror.”

This inspiration was the starting point for the composition Mesiti commissioned for the film. Mesiti collaborated with musician and composer Julian Desailly and sound recorder and arranger Jan Vysocky to interweave music with sounds from nature (insects, bird calls, wind) to create a soundtrack that seems to have emerged from the landscape. This culminates in Desailly, the only human performer in the film, playing the penny whistle in Lochnagar Crater, as though channeling the spirit of the

site.

The film concludes with footage cycling through different seasons and times of day, alluding to nature's cycles and time passing, acknowledging the ongoing consequences of war while emphasizing the potential for renewal and hope. The film provides a complex engagement with the experience and legacy of the Western Front, placing the Australian experience within a global context.

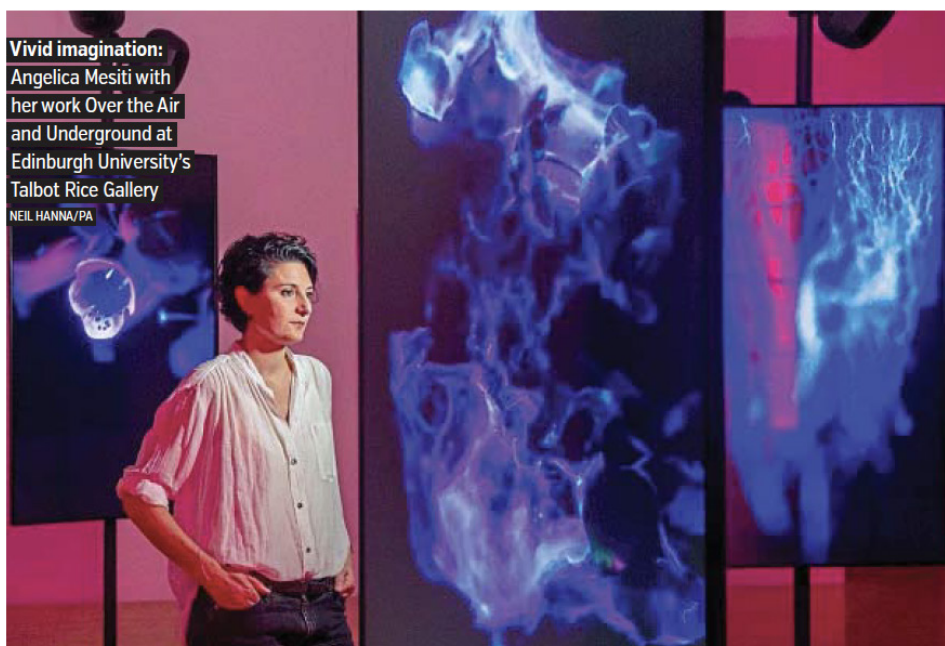
**GALERIE
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Angelica Mesiti / In the Round

01 Oct 2021 - 05 Mar 2022



Angelica Mesiti, 'Over the Air and Underground', 2020, five-channel video, 10-channels of mono audio, 9 mins. Installation view, Talbot Rice Gallery, University of Edinburgh 2021. Photo: Sally Georgiou



Vivid imagination:
Angelica Mesiti with
her work *Over the Air*
and *Underground* at
Edinburgh University's
Talbot Rice Gallery
NEIL HANNA/PA

Aussie artist generating a buzz

A 400-YEAR-OLD musical score based on the sound of bees in the hive has inspired part of an Australian artist's exhibition set to launch in Edinburgh.

The choral piece, titled *The Bees Madrigal*, was written by Elizabethan polymath Charles Butler, a pioneer in English beekeeping.

His four-part vocal harmony mimics a sound known as piping, which queen bees make during certain periods of their development.

Leading artist Angelica Mesiti has

edited the score to produce her own sound installation, *The Swarming Song*, recorded in Edinburgh University's Reid Concert Hall.

It will form part of her *In The Round* show, which opens at the university's Talbot Rice Gallery on Friday.

Mesiti is known for her large-scale video works, and major pieces on display include three internationally acclaimed video installations.

One called *Over the Air* and *Underground* is inspired by forms of

communication in nature and uses ultraviolet light to depict how bees see the world. Mesiti said the work 'involves thinking about several different forms of communication that happen in the natural world, including bees and the vision of bees and how bees see the world'.

The exhibition also showcases new work by Mesiti sparked by the university's cultural collections and about 50 artefacts from them will go on show.

PREVIEW | Video, performance and installation artist Angela Mesiti has spent much of the past year and all of 2019 working on her most ambitious project to date, the one of the most recent artists to arrive in the world. The result is a multi-layered installation, opening community through music and choreography on display over at the Venice Biennale's Australian Pavilion. Developed in collaboration with the Australian Council on the Arts, the idea for *ASSEMBLY* was sparked by a text-based idea.

"Quite a few messages I came across this year were about the idea of community," she explains. "I was fascinated by it because it looks like a little piece of a human being and what it says, but it's not about to be a keyword. It actually functions as a typewriter which, as a visual metaphor, is for creating every message that takes place. I was intrigued by a text of any text thought was that there would potentially be a way to translate that into this machine."

The idea for *ASSEMBLY* came a few years ago when Mesiti began putting together a program for the Venice Biennale in 2019. She (like herself) is highly influenced by her environment, she felt that society had changed, and is continuing to experience, a crisis because the digital world is changing so fast, and it's not clear what's working, what we need to do, and how do we move forward? *ASSEMBLY* became a way for her to explore these questions, further inspired by what Mesiti saw as an undeniable emergence in public discourse around the world.

"There seems to be an intensification of the need to go to a place where we can go to the government to take action on the side of the people," she says. "Thinking of the Venice Biennale as the 'Yellow Vests' or 'children taking days off school' or 'climate change' around the world."

Visual Art

A musical get-together

Angela Mesiti's work for the Venice Biennale is an optimistic vision of community

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"There seems to be an intensification of the need to go to a place where we can go to the government to take action on the side of the people," she says. "Thinking of the Venice Biennale as the 'Yellow Vests' or 'children taking days off school' or 'climate change' around the world."

Visual Art

A musical get-together

Angela Mesiti's work for the Venice Biennale is an optimistic vision of community

PREVIEW | Video, performance and installation artist Angela Mesiti has spent much of the past year and all of 2019 working on her most ambitious project to date, the one of the most recent artists to arrive in the world. The result is a multi-layered installation, opening community through music and choreography on display over at the Venice Biennale's Australian Pavilion. Developed in collaboration with the Australian Council on the Arts, the idea for *ASSEMBLY* was sparked by a text-based idea.

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ARTIST PROFILE

2019 Venice Biennale artist

Angela Mesiti

speaks with Elli Walsh

A BILLION DOLLAR CON?
John McDonald

ANGELA BRENNAN
GEMMA SMITH
JOHN ASLANIDIS
AMANDA MARBURG
CUTLER FOOTWAY
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12 EMERGING ARTISTS TO WATCH THIS YEAR

An exhibition view of 'Tally
Language' 2017, directed by
Angelica Mesiti, at Artspace
Sydney, Australia



Installation view of 'Tally
Language' 2017, directed by
Angelica Mesiti, at Artspace
Sydney, Australia

12 EMERGING ARTISTS TO WATCH THIS YEAR

ANGELICA MESITI

Two years ago, Angelica Mesiti, an artist of Italian origin who lives between Sydney and Paris, came across a group of students on the Paris metro who were conversing in sign language. "They were all gestulating wildly, these really normal teenagers dressed in fat sneakers and backwards caps," she said. "I was taken by how expressive their conversation was and how 'loud' it was." Inspired by what she'd seen, Mesiti got to work creating a new project: "The Silent Choir." Calling it "a voiceless lament," she video-recorded a choir she assembled performing Ralph Vaughan Williams' "Serenade to Music" on a white stage. Done entirely in sign language, the performance is utterly silent. "It's about the impossibility of hearing the music of the spheres," she said. "I thought that would be interesting to explore through a silent language."

Mesiti's style of art is fundamentally an anthropological one. Exploring questions of language and voice in particular, she has established herself as a serious artist to watch. In a recent work called "The Calling," she travelled to rural parts of Greece, Turkey and the Canary Islands to document an



Courtesy of ANGELICA MESITI

12 EMERGING ARTISTS TO WATCH THIS YEAR

A production still from 'Tally
Language' 2017, directed by
Angelica Mesiti



Courtesy of ANGELICA MESITI and Galerie Allen, Paris



How We Speak

ANGELICA MESITI's films explore
the myriad ways humans communicate
by TOM JEFFREYS

THERE IS MORE TO LANGUAGE than speech and writing, for the artist Angelica Mesiti, communication is always scribbled physically – by a living body or by the form of mark or the echo of a sound – and it is always reaching beyond itself. Across film and installation, the artist asks us to bear witness as a rare language becomes a tourist attraction, a distress signal becomes a dance or movement is called in shorthand by bodies no longer able to perform.

Before becoming an artist, Mesiti trained as a dancer both classical and contemporary – and dance remains a powerful influence upon her work. In particular, she credits the 'body weather' method, conceived by Japanese dancer and actor Min Tanaka and introduced into the artist's native Australia by Tess de Quincey in 1989. Mesiti talks of the method's focus on muscle and bone: 'It is a very different way of thinking about aesthetics,' she told me recently, 'and about the human body.' Eventually, Mesiti felt art to be a more expansive future than dance. Still, those early interests in non-verbal, bodily means of communication remain. 'Dance has never really left my practice,' she says, 'it's just that I'm not the performer any more.'

Recently, Mesiti has become fascinated by the way languages die. Sometimes, a single utterance is enough signal the end. Currently touring institutions across Australia, *Relay League* (2017) is a three-channel video installation that takes as its starting point the following message, issued by the French navy on 31 January 1997: 'Appel tous. Ceci est notre dernier cri avant notre silence éternel.' 'Calling all. This is our final cry before our eternal silence.' This short, surprisingly poetic announcement marked the death of Morse code, the distress signalling system originally developed in the 1830s but rendered redundant by the

emergence of new digital technologies. *Relay League* sees this coded message translated first into music, then into dance. A series of hanging sculptures renders literal this process of becoming artefact.

Relay League was filmed in the Paris suburb of Pantin. It opens on an urban rooftop, a place from which messages are broadcast. Against the hum of traffic, we watch and listen as jazz drummer Uriel Barthélémy taps out a semi-improvised drum piece, conceived, at Mesiti's instigation, in response to that final Morse code message. It starts with the gentle brushing of symbols placed atop the drum skin, gradually rising and falling in complexity and in the urgency of its rhythms.

The central screen is perhaps the most intriguing. Two young dancers, a man and a woman, sit close together on the floor. One, Sindri Runudde, has limited vision and is guided by the other, Emilia Wibron Vesterlund, with her hands as she whispers to him in Swedish – now quietly, now a little louder. The two are close friends and have developed this system so that Runudde might 'see' performances. Mesiti tells me that they have never thought of what they do as a language. The scene is extraordinarily intimate and powerful: bodily and beautiful, close but not sexual. Yet, it is also a scene from which we are partially excluded: if this is a language, then it is one that relies on the physical proximity and bodily self-knowledge of the experienced dancer. It is also underpinned by a mystery. It is not until the third and last film that we find out what the pair are responding to.

This final reveal is not only one of narrative but also of environment. Separating each film, and guiding the visitor's movement through the gallery, is a series of screens

OPPOSITE PAGE:
Relay League, 2017,
three-channel video
stills. All images
courtesy the artist,
Anna Schwartz Gallery,
Melbourne, and Galerie
Allen, Paris

BELOW:
The Calling, 2013-14,
three-channel video
stills





BELOW
Citizens Band, 2012,
four-channel video
stills

made from transparent polyurethane. The flickering light of each film leads viewers from one space to the next. Mesiti cites the French word *parcours* – a route or journey – describing the experience as ‘lantern-esque’. In the final film, it is revealed that Vesterlund and Runudde are reacting to another dancer, Filipe Lourenço, whose own light-limbed, circling movements are a response to Barthélémi’s percussion. Vesterlund and Runudde are also shown responding in context to Barthélémi in real time: Mesiti describes it as a ‘real, actual translation’. The result is a range of transformations: from language to code to music and dance. What is lost is a specific, knowable meaning. But much stands to be gained: richness of sound and movement, complex human embodiments stemming from the most minimal of codes.

Relay League marks the scheduled end of a planned language; yet, such a demise can, by contrast, take generations to occur of its own accord. In *The Calling* (2013–14), an earlier three-channel video installation, Mesiti provides a multi-layered document of the changing status of another specialist means of communication: whistling. Some remote rural communities – including the village of Kuskoy in northern Turkey, La Gomera in the Canary Islands and the Greek island of Evia – utilize a highly specialized form of whistling to communicate with precision across distances. In this quiet, beautiful film, a woman on a tea plantation whistles to announce the arrival of the tea truck; a man pauses from chopping kindling to whistle to his wife to come in for lunch.

Whistling may still be used in daily life but it is fast becoming a relic. Wind turbines, pylons and electricity cables show us the wider context of modernity’s encroachment

upon ancient agrarian lifestyles. *The Calling* includes scenes of children learning to whistle in school and locals entertaining tourists in a restaurant. The old ways are dying, only to be resurrected as a kind of performance. ‘I wanted to document the life cycle of the language,’ says Mesiti. ‘from a useful everyday tool to something maintained as a kind of artefact, characteristic of community identity, but now a performed element of the culture.’

Mesiti mentions that the whistling system (which, like Morse code, is not strictly a language), has been included on UNESCO’s list of Intangible Cultural Heritage. ‘What kind of change happens when that takes place?’ she asks. ‘It reminds me of certain 19th-century ethnographers attempting to ‘save’ indigenous oral cultures by fixing their fluid utterances into written documents. It also recalls how the words of an artist giving a face-to-face interview seem so different on the printed page. Longevity may be gained but something is taken away in the process. A language becomes like an artefact in a museum,’ says Mesiti.

Like *Relay League*, *The Calling* opens on an urban rooftop, but this time the sounds of birdsong are audible above the traffic. A little later, we see an old woman chatting reassuringly to her goats. I like to see these little moments as a gentle push towards an expanded definition of language that includes the non-human. The film crystallizes in its closing moments. A white-haired man pauses for a moment from gathering branches. He gazes down the valley and whistles a warning to his grandson playing near the road as it weaves around the mountain side: ‘Ancor! Don’t go too close to the edge.’ Ancor looks up. ‘OK,’ he replies, but in Spanish. He understands the whistling but cannot, or simply does not, respond in kind.

There is a parallel here with Mesiti’s own childhood as daughter of Italian-speaking parents living in Sydney, now based in Paris, where she has become familiar with the sense of living as an outsider – linguistically at least. This comes through strongly in works such as *Citizens* (2012), a film portrait of singers and musicians performing alone: a Cameroonian water drummer in a Paris swimming pool, a Sudanese whistler in a parked taxi in Paris and an Algerian singer on the Paris metro. None of the performers lives in the place where they were born; instead, their music acts as a form of cultural memento.

Waves (2017) – titled after the Latin motto of the French Republic, *Fluctuat nec mergitur* (Tossed by the waves but never sunk) – was produced during Paris’s extended state of emergency. A silent, lingering close-up of the French capital’s famous monument at the centre of the Place de la République – where two million people gathered in solidarity after the *Charlie Hebdo* massacre in 2015 – Mesiti’s most overtly political work to date. Her latest work, *Mother Tongue* (2017) – a new commission for the 2017 European Capital of Culture, Aarhus – for which the artist worked closely with communities living as outsiders in a utopian housing project. Featuring office workers, children, a Somali family and others, *Mother Tongue* explores how people connect with their cultural identities through music and dance. The work was shown at ‘O’ Space, Aarhus, Denmark, from April until August 2017. *Relay League* is touring five galleries across Australia until 2019. Her solo exhibition at Artspace, Seoul, South Korea, runs until February.

(2015), a group of women from the Algeria–Tunisia border perform a ritualistic ‘hair dance’. Both works are portraits of the psychological states of their subjects, based solely on their faces and bodies. Both are tightly cropped, with no sense of wider place. Both are also silent.

Similarly focused is *The Colour of Saying* (2015), one part of which shows a seated pair of retired dancers enacting a *pas de deux* from Tchaikovsky’s ballet *Swan Lake* (1875–76) using only their hands and upper bodies. Flutterings of the fingers translate certain movements that they are no longer able to perform; the fingers of the woman’s right hand brush across those of her left as the strings strike up. It’s inexplicably heartbreaking.

Such tender moments lie at the heart of Mesiti’s work. Each piece evokes the complex simplicity of an encounter between living beings. The mountainside exchange between grandfather and grandson; the tactile communication between Vesterlund and Runudde; the body memories of the two retired dancers; an old lady and her goats: every instance is an ethical imperative to look or listen and attempt to understand the experiences of a fellow being. ■

TOM JEFFREYS is a writer based in Paris, France. His first book, *Signal Failure: London to Birmingham*, HSD on Post, was published by Influx Press in 2017.

ANGELICA MESITI lives in Paris, France. In 2017, she had solo exhibitions at Artspace, Sydney, Australia, Anna Schwartz Gallery, Melbourne, Australia, and ‘O’ Space, Aarhus, Denmark. Her survey show at the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, runs until April and her film *Relay League* is touring five galleries across Australia until 2019. Her solo exhibition at Artspace, Seoul, South Korea, runs until February.

BELOW
The Colour of Saying,
2015, three-channel
video stills





ÉVÉNEMENT / LILLE / DU 26 SEPTEMBRE AU 17 JANVIER

«TU DOIS CHANGER TA VIE!» : L'EXPOSITION QUI VA VOUS FAIRE RENAITRE

SPECTACULAIRE, DÉROUANTE, EXPÉRIMENTALE ET UN BRIN PROVO-
CATRICE, L'EXPOSITION D'ART CONTEMPORAIN PHARE DE L'ÉVÈNE-
MENT «RENAISSANCE» À LILLE REPOUSSE LES LIMITES DE L'EXERCICE
CURATORIAL. ET POURRAIT BIEN CHANGER LE COURS DE VOTRE VIE...

PAR JUDICAËL LAVRADOR

JULIE C. FORTIER *La Chasse*

Un mur recouvert de milliers de touches à l'aquarelle figure une espèce de prairie suspendue ou de faune
à effleurer du nez. Trois odeurs s'en dégagent alors, l'une évoque l'herbe fraîchement coupée, l'autre le pelage chaud
d'un animal, et la dernière, plus inquiétante, celle du sang.

2014, installation interactive in situ, touches à l'aquarelle, trois parfums, des, variables.

Le titre de l'exposition, sous forme d'inci-
tation impérieuse, peut déconcentrer le
visiteur qui venait passer au Tipostol un
moment de contemplation sans conséquences,
où il aurait joué le rôle qu'on lui attribue gé-
néralement consistant à regarder et à écouter, ni
plus ni moins. Tromper ce confort, c'est le but :
il s'agit ici de mettre le spectateur au contact de
l'art pour le rendre acteur du show mais aussi
de sa propre vie. «Tu dois changer ta vie!», la for-
mule est empruntée à l'essai éponyme du philo-
sophe allemand Peter Sloterdijk publié en 2011.
Lui-même la tient d'un poème de Rainer Maria
Rilke qui l'entendit s'échapper d'un torse antique
lors d'une visite au Louvre. «En l'espace d'un
siècle», écrit Sloterdijk, son écho s'est amplifié,
mieux, elle est devenue l'impératif absolu qui
résonne autour du globe. C'est indéniable :
l'unique préoccupation du monde actuel
est la compréhension croissante du fait que cela
ne peut pas continuer ainsi. Encore faut-il se
donner les moyens de la mettre en œuvre. «Tu

dois changer ta vie!» peut donc se comprendre
aussi comme un défi que l'exposition se lance à
elle-même et pourrait s'entendre davantage
comme «Tu dois changer ta manière d'exposer»,
l'injonction s'adressant des lors au milieu de
l'art, aux artistes et aux commissaires. L'homme
à l'origine de cette folle entreprise est Fabrice
Bousteau, rédacteur en chef de Beaux Arts
magazine – c'est dit et cela ne changera rien
à notre manière de présenter les choses.
Comment s'y prend-il pour changer la donne
et innover dans le genre?
Comprise dans une constellation d'évène-
ments, l'exposition prend à bras-le-corps le
credo optimiste de «Renaissance». Didier
Fussler, directeur artistique, le définit ainsi :
montrer que «dans notre monde en crise et en
perte de repères, le renouveau est en marche, à
travers de nouveaux équilibres planétaires, une
accélération des inventions et innovations, leur
diffusion en temps réel (via Internet), à travers
encore de nouvelles manières de penser le

«Tu dois choisir ta vie!» commence en effet par
laisser le hasard influencer sur la vie du spectateur.
Si vous vivez en couple, il y a de fortes chances
que vous empruntiez un chemin autre que
celui de votre partenaire. Une manière pour le
commissaire de vous installer dans une bulle
afin que vous vous confrontiez à vous-même.
Mais, rassurez-vous, s'il y a trois parcours diffé-
rents, matérialisés par des lignes de couleur au
sol, deux d'entre eux finissent par se
rejoindre. Ce moment de bascule, là où les
deux lignes se retrouvent et où le spectateur
passe un cap, correspond à l'installation du
Chinois Xu Bing. Espèce d'adaptation de l'allé-
gorie de la caverne de Platon, celle-ci se pré-
sente d'abord comme un merveilleux paysage
traditionnel chinois, montagneux et vaporeux.
Mais dès qu'on contourne cette toile de pro-
jection, le subterfuge apparaît : le motif est en

réalité composé de divers débris et de débris
végétaux. Si elle magnifie la perception sensu-
elle, l'exposition incite cependant à ne pas y
prêter une confiance aveugle.

UNE TRAVERSÉE DE L'ART CONTEMPORAIN

Au sous-sol, le troisième parcours vous fait d'ail-
leurs traverser des œuvres qui métamorphosent
l'horizon bouché de cet espace sombre. Une
installation vidéo de Giovanni Ozzola crée
l'illusion que les portes d'un garage s'ouvrent sur
le ciel nuageux d'un désert de sable ou sur un
coucher de soleil marin. S'ensuit un long tunnel
où l'artiste JR raconte la vie de migrants débar-
qués à Ellis Island, face à la statue de la Liberté
à New York. Habitué des fresques photo-
graphiques géantes, JR puise cette fois dans les
archives de l'histoire, pour peupler les lieux de
dizaines de silhouettes de migrants, nomades

audacieux espérant pour eux et leurs descen-
dants des vies meilleures. JR propose ainsi un
film dense et poétique avec Robert De Niro
dans le rôle principal et une bande-son réalisée
par Woodkid et le génial pianiste Nils Frahm.
Car «Tu dois changer ta vie!» ne fait pas l'im-
passe sur les thèmes sociaux et politiques. Dans
ce registre, une des plus belles œuvres est livrée
par Angelica Mesiti, qui a filmé aux quatre coins
du monde des êtres chantant ou jouant d'instru-
ments rudimentaires, en public ou en privé.
Entrelaçant ces battements de percussions
aquatiques, ces rythmes de rai, ces airs de viole,
Citizens Band devient un hymne populaire et
mémorisé et fait sourde, avec émoi et comme
par enchantement, quelque chose comme le
chant du monde et du vivre-ensemble. De quoi
conjuguer le titre de l'exposition à la première
personne du pluriel, passer du «tu» au «nous». ■



PHILIPPE RAMETTE *La Traversée du miroir* (détail)

L'installation invite le spectateur à effleurer son propre
reflet et, simultanément à faire basculer le miroir.
Entre apparition et disparition de soi, entre ce qu'on voit
et ce qui se révèle n'être que du vent, l'œuvre réactualise
en quelque sorte l'allégorie de la caverne de Platon.
2007, bois, miroir, 217 x 148 x 120 cm.



SIMON MONK *Peter Parker, série Secret Identity*

Cette peinture de l'Homme-Araignée ne se prive pas
de minimiser l'impact de ses superpouvoirs en prenant
pour modèle sa figurine emballée dans un sachet.
Les reflets de l'emballage lui font de l'ombre et révèlent
sa vraie nature d'artefact commercial.
2013, huile aquarelle sur toile, 60 x 50 cm.

DE RIO À SÉOUL, LILLE AU DIAPASON DE VILLES EN PLEINE RENAISSANCE

«Renaissance», c'est une myriade de manifestations qui ne se limitent pas aux deux expositions du Tipostol. «Tu dois changer ta vie!»
et «Séoul, ville!» (lire p. 100). L'ouverture se fait en fanfare au rythme des percussions des écoles de samba de Rio, une des
cités-mondes présentées à Lille, retenues parce que, sans se résoudre à la crise économique et sociale qu'elles ont traversée, ces
cités-mondes mettent en œuvre toute l'énergie dont elles disposent, et plus encore, pour s'en sortir. Parmi elles, Detroit et ses DJ's
inventeurs, dès les années 1990, d'une techno industrielle investissent la Gare Saint-Sauveur, tandis qu'Eindhoven exhibe à la Maison Folle
Moulin toute l'inventivité de ses designers. Au musée de l'Hospice Comtesse, l'occasion est aussi offerte de découvrir la scène
artistique de Phnom Penh, particulièrement soucieuse de réévaluer les années 1970 cambodgiennes et celles de la période coloniale.
Le LaM de Villeneuve-d'Ascq décline, lui, le thème général en tirant le fil de «la perception et la connaissance que l'être humain a de
lui-même et du monde» à travers une exposition d'une soixantaine d'artistes contemporains. Lille3000 version 2015-2016, c'est encore
Michel Gondry et son «Usine de films amateurs» implantée à Roubaix jusqu'à la mi-novembre. «Bedfords» ou les innovations dans le
domaine du textile à l'usage des artistes au musée d'Histoire naturelle de Lille... Plus mille autres raisons de se réjouir des temps à venir.

À VOIR

«Renaissance»
du 26 septembre au 17 janvier
www.renaissance-lille.com
«Tu dois changer ta vie!»
Tipostol - avenue Willy Brandt
59000 Lille - 03 20 14 47 60

À LIRE

* Catalogue de «Renaissance»
Beaux Arts éditions - 96 p. - 12,50 €
Tu dois changer ta vie
par Peter Sloterdijk - 65, Fayard
coll. Poésie - 672 p. - 12 €



contoured by the tops of high-rise buildings as he looked up from various street intersections in Hong Kong and New York. He employed color filters to produce monochromatic images, so that the sky, a tinted, empty space, becomes in each picture a play on perspective and urban experience. The shapes of these enclosed skylines were later appropriated by the artist and his longtime collaborator Sara Wong to form cookie cutters, and in the work *Making City Cookies*, 1999, the duo distributed the sky-shaped biscuits to gallery visitors. The project marked a pivotal point in the development of Leung's practice, as he began experimenting with the ways in which images might be transposed onto latent interfaces capable of generating social relations and narratives. In what seemed like a missed opportunity to capture the work's full potential of social engagement, the Shenzhen presentation, instead of including baked goods being served up, featured *City Cookie of Shanghai*, 2000—video documentation of Wong eating the treats, along with a display of the custom-made molds.

Also on view were the results of Leung's forays into research-based work, which remain deeply grounded in photography. In these efforts, images function as blueprints and points of departure. "Domestica Invisible," 2004–2007, a series of photographs taken during visits to the homes of some eighty strangers and friends in Hong Kong; Sapporo, Japan; Canberra, Australia; and Plymouth, UK, probes the relationship between bodies and domestic environments in these space-strapped cities. Residing in these images of interior nooks and crannies and anonymous personal effects are uncanny stories that inhabit an in-between space of familiarity and opacity.

Two conversations recorded during these meetings are featured in Leung's series "Jonathan & Muragishi," 2005–13, which commemorates the artist's late friends the American art writer Jonathan Napack and the Japanese artist Hiroaki Muragishi. Translated, respectively, into Mandarin and English, and dubbed, respectively, by American and Japanese speakers with similar accents, Napack's and Hiroaki's personal anecdotes play from two sound sculptures crafted from items found in their individual homes. In spite of the complex lengths to which Leung went in an effort to recast the voices of the protagonists, his apparent closeness with his subjects brings forth an intimacy not made palpable in "Domestica Invisible." As Leung continues his itinerant search for maneuvering room within Hong Kong's physical and political architectures, it may in fact be his own thoughtful endeavors, and their unforeseen effects, that will pry open cracks where his home city's alternative realities can settle.

—Christina Li

SYDNEY

Angelica Mesiti

ANNA SCHWARTZ GALLERY

The chilly elegance of Angelica Mesiti's *The Colour of Saying* (all works 2015) confirms a marked evolution from her formative years in the Sydney art scene of the 2000s. For much of that decade, Mesiti was one of the Kingpins, a four-woman troupe known for its hilarious, high-camp parodies, live and filmed, of heavy-metal, rap, and hip-hop music videos. These works combined low production values, popular-cultural references, and a hyperactive performance aesthetic. Mesiti's recent solo efforts seem a world away from these delirious assaults on taste.

The Colour of Saying is a three-part video installation derived from a live performance the artist arranged at Lilith Performance Studio, in Malmö, Sweden, in March 2015. A blinding white space formed the setting of three separate performances of gestural communication: sign language, hand clapping, and a ballet, of sorts. The only props were a

music stand and an outsize white step-structure used as a stage by the performers. With a team of cinematic specialists, Mesiti translated the live acts into a high-definition digital-video suite, whose total duration is twenty-five minutes.

In the gallery, the separate performances unfolded consecutively on a trio of large, double-sided screens staggered at ground level. *The Silent Choir* shows nine Swedish high-school students, in training to be



sign-language interpreters, signing Ralph Vaughan Williams's choral composition *Serenade to Music* (1938). A gliding camera amplifies the facial expressions and concentrated gazes of the students, along with the rhythmic rise and fall of their hands. All is hushed, except for sounds such as the rustling of clothing and the occasional meeting of lips as choir members silently mouth lyrics.

Angelica Mesiti,
The Colour of Saying,
2015, three-channel
HD video, color,
sound, 25 minutes.
Installation view.

Seconds after the choir departs the stage, the same pristine white space reappears on the screen assigned to *Clapping Music*. The vacant setting is punctuated by the entrance of percussionists Viktor Feuk and Tomas Erlandsson, who enact a syncopated, phase-shifting, clapping routine that echoed throughout the gallery space. Inspired by a 1972 work of the same name by Minimalist-music luminary Steve Reich, *Clapping Music* deploys human hands as percussive instruments. And as in all of the videos, the performers are configured not so much as psychological presences but as darker-hued bodily forms that delineate space within the white field.

In contrast to the sonic dynamism of the clappers, *Swan Song*, the third component of the installation, frames low-intensity physical activity. Dressed in smart daywear, veteran ballet dancers Jette Nejman and Rolf Hepp sit side by side on the step sculpture. Although they are equipped with earphones transmitting music from Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* (1875–76), we don't actually hear it until the closing moments of the video. The silence draws our attention to the stiff grace of the dancers' upper-body movements as they perform a hand-marked pas de deux without ever touching. Hand marking is a system of gestural shorthand dancers use to rehearse the shape, tempo, emotion, and spatial dynamics of dance phrases while conserving energy. In recalling the placement of ordinary body movements in formal settings by the pioneers of Minimalist dance, Mesiti has transformed a behind-the-scenes activity into a performance stripped of expressive hyperbole or bodily athleticism. This is indeed a swan song of classical ballet as it is normally staged.

The Colour of Saying reimagines the ascetic bliss of a Minimalist aesthetic. This suite of austere beautiful, meticulously designed video performances is an accomplished addition to Mesiti's ongoing exploration of embodied ways of communicating.

—Toni Ross

theguardian

Angelica Mesiti: the artist who records a choir in song without a single sound

Language marks humans out from the rest of the animal kingdom - but so does the way we use our hands. In her latest work, the Australian artist shows why

Clarissa Sebag-Montefiore

Friday 8 May 2015 14.37 AEST

In Angelica Mesiti's latest video work a Swedish choir performs Ralph Vaughan Williams' *Serenade to Music* on a blinding white stage. But there is no sound.

The choir perform silently using nothing but their hands - they sing in sign language. Based on *The Merchant of Venice*, Vaughan Williams's work sees two characters contemplate the melodies of the planets, a tune inaudible to humans, under the shade of the moon.

The *Silent Choir* is a voiceless lament, Mesiti's meditation on what it feels like to be shut out - of music and the heavens. "It's about the impossibility of hearing the music of the spheres," says the artist over coffee at the Anna Schwartz Gallery in Sydney where her exhibition *The Colour of Saying* is now showing. "I thought that would be interesting to explore through a silent language."

Viewers are forced to confront the experience of living in a noiseless world. Colour is derived not from the setting - resplendent in bright white - but from the choir's rich (distinctly physical) human interactions. The Parisian-based Australian artist wants her audience to ask: what other ways, aside from spoken language, do we have to express ourselves?

Mesiti was inspired when she came across some students in a Paris metro station talking in sign language. "They were all gesticulating wildly, these really normal teenagers dressed in fat sneakers and backwards caps," recalls the artist. "I was taken by how expressive their conversation was and how loud it was."

Language marks humans out from the rest of the animal kingdom but so does the unique way we use our fingers and thumbs. Here in this video, hands stand in for speaking. With scant sound, the viewer starts to notice other things: dark nail polish on the fingers of the conductor, the sweep of eyeliner on a "singer", a subtle nod of the head, a widening of the eyes.

Three large screens rotate three separate videos. As *The Silent Choir* fades, *Clapping Music* - featuring a couple of percussionists smacking their palms together in an escalating beat - begins. *Swan Song*, the final piece, sees two elderly ballet dancers pirouette a pas de deux with only their hands.

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All three elements of the exhibition were originally done as a two-hour performance piece in the Swedish city of Malmö. The atmosphere was one of heightened hush and Mesiti felt it important to punctuate that pressure by leading audiences back from “the world of silence ... into the world of sound”.

That release came from the percussion of the second video, influenced by Steve Reich’s seminal 1972 composition, *Clapping Music*, which used the human body as an instrument. Low frequency sounds are more easily perceived by the deaf, who can often feel sound waves physically penetrate their bodies even if they can’t hear them. She noticed that hearing-impaired audience members jumped when the clapping suddenly erupted.

The 38-year-old Sydneysider is fast becoming a video artist to watch. Of Italian origin, she now lives in Paris with her artist husband close to the Charlie Hebdo offices. Mesiti remembers the heavily armed gendarmerie around her neighbourhood on the day of the murders but also the sense of solidarity: “I feel like we saw a lot of kindness. After that violent act, there was this feeling on the nights that followed of this gentleness in the street.”

In June, Mesiti will show a work at Carriageworks in its group show *24 Frames Per Second* about North Africans living in Paris. The piece explores the erotic nature of hair (particularly revealing in cultures which champion the veil) and the Berber tradition of using hair to enter a trance-like state in ceremonial wedding dances.

She is noted for her anthropological approach, using cinema to explore language, voice, and culture. For her last work, *The Calling*, she travelled to remote parts of Turkey, Greece, and the Canary Islands to document an ancient form of whistling language. Developed as a way to communicate across vast valleys and sky-high mountains, modernity has taken its toll. *The Calling* is a chronology of one language’s reduction from everyday use to tourist attraction and cultural artefact.

Swan Song, by contrast, shows a technique still employed daily by ballet dancers. The two veteran dancers – 70-year-old Jette Nejman and 84-year-old Rolf Hepp – perform a *Swan Lake* duet using the choreographic shortcut – mapping out moves with their hands not feet – dancers use to conserve energy and learn a piece without straining their bodies.

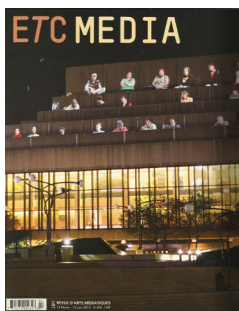
The pair are listening to Tchaikovsky’s majestic score on earphones, so initially they appear to be swaying in silence. Hepp almost pants as he prepares a phantom lift with just his arms, his legs and body still. The piece – at times beautiful, at others desperately sad – taps into the ballerina’s flawed pursuit of perfection that gives way to ageing bodies.

Mesiti found it difficult to find a female former dancer willing to take part; most were too self-conscious about being long past their prime. “It’s a really complex thing to get older as a ballet dancer,” she sighs. But the show, seen in another way, was a chance for Nejman and Hepp to dance once more, “another chapter for their performing live”.

At the gallery, our talk draws to a close with fading claps echoing around the room. Then Mesiti remembers one more thing. In Malmö, a blind dancer stopped next to the live performance of *Swan Song*, transfixed. Mesiti watched as a sighted friend took his hand to mirror the ballet dancers’ movements.

“For me that was such a memorable moment,” says the artist. “I was watching someone who has found a way to describe what he is not seeing through a physical action. It looked like they were dancing.”

The Colour of Saying is at Anna Schwartz Gallery, Sydney until 13 June. *24 Frames a Second* is at Carriageworks, Sydney from 18 June to 2 August



Angelica Mesiti, Citizens Band... Le sens de ce qui circule entre nous

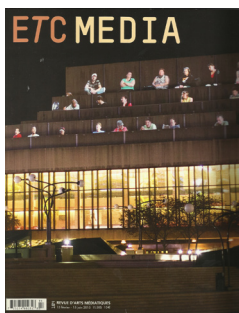


Entre les 19 juin et 7 septembre derniers, le Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal présentait la première exposition individuelle en Amérique du Nord de l'artiste australienne Angelica Mesiti, dont l'installation immersive *Citizens Band*. L'œuvre figurait parallèlement à l'exposition *La beauté du geste*, laquelle soulignait les 50 ans d'existence du Musée tout en mettant en valeur cinquante dons de collectionneurs et d'artistes dans un geste formel de réciprocité initié par John Zeppetelli, directeur général et conservateur en chef du Musée. L'œuvre *Citizens Band* était placée à l'une des deux portes d'entrée de l'exposition, un contexte fort approprié pour cette première nord-américaine qui offre une mise en lumière hautement sensorielle de ce qui circule entre nous¹. *Citizens Band*, d'Angelica Mesiti, s'est démarquée à l'international et a valu à l'artiste, entre autres récompenses, le Prix Anne Landa 2013. Formellement, c'est en pénétrant une salle tamisée que l'on découvre l'installation vidéo haute définition à quatre canaux. L'espace carré que forment les quatre écrans du dispositif incite le visiteur à prendre place en son centre. Selon le cartel, l'œuvre diffuse quatre vidéos montrant chacune un musicien professionnel exilé de sa terre natale, mais rattaché à celle-ci par sa musique. Le récit à géographie variable de chaque protagoniste illustre de manière sensible leur attachement profond à leur culture, leurs traditions et

leur histoire, le tout participant à la (re)construction identitaire de chacun en terre d'accueil. Seulement, pour peu que l'on prolonge son passage au cœur du dispositif, la proposition se déploie de façon inattendue. Pour débiter, le visiteur doit effectuer une première migration en pénétrant l'espace immersif qu'est *Citizens Band*. Il doit d'abord permettre à sa vue de s'ajuster à la salle tamisée, puis se tracer un chemin parmi les corps-visiteurs étendus ça et là et faisant face à l'écran qui est actif. À titre de premier mouvement, une femme à la peau noire joue des percussions avec pour unique instrument la surface de l'eau. Le cartel nous apprend qu'il s'agit de la Camerounaise Géraldine Zongo. Elle apparaît seule dans une piscine publique d'un arrondissement du nord de Paris pratiquant l'Akutuk, une technique traditionnelle de percussion aquatique qui lui fut enseignée par sa grand-mère et qui est normalement exécutée en polyphonie par des groupes de femmes de son village natal, afin de célébrer l'importance et la puissance vivifiante de la rivière. À peine avons-nous rejoint Zongo dans le plaisir contagieux qu'elle témoigne par le biais de sa gestuelle improbable que l'écran s'éteint. Le second écran émet son signal. Chacun des visiteurs effectue une rapide rotation vers la droite afin de faire face à celui-ci. Nouveau plan large sur un homme quasi aveugle d'origine arabe qui s'accompagne d'un vieux Casio

SA-75 dans le métro de Paris. Émouvant isolement porté par son chant raï dont le lyrisme échappe visiblement aux passagers du wagon. Quand l'écran passe au silence cette fois, un sentiment de perte m'étreint. Comme par anticipation, chacun effectue une nouvelle rotation vers la droite pour faire face au prochain écran. J'observe discrètement l'assemblage rotatif qui se forme par le biais des corps qui s'accumulent au cœur du dispositif. Je remarque que la distance de (re)présentation entre l'artiste, l'œuvre et son public se fait de plus en plus relative. À ce point de confluence, il résulte de nos révolutions sur nous-mêmes une sorte de danse improvisée qui évolue en temps réel, voire même une médiation de nos regards subjectifs migrant d'est en ouest. Une pensée éclair pour Pina Bausch me traverse. Cette dernière travaillait à partir du corps de ses danseurs plutôt qu'à partir de formes à (re)produire. Le cours de mes pensées est interrompu par le troisième écran qui s'illumine. Même rotation, même plan large, suivi de la cadence : plan de rapprochement, plan de rapprochement, plan de rapprochement. Un homme d'apparence asiatique est assis à un carrefour devant une vitrine. Entre ses jambes est posé un morin khuur (viole à tête de cheval), instrument à cordes traditionnel de la culture nomade mongole et désigné chef-d'œuvre du Patrimoine oral et immatériel de l'humanité par l'UNESCO. Nous

Angelica Mesiti, *Citizens Band*, 2012. Installation vidéo.



suivons la suite de glissandos que forme son archet quand, en un balancement du corps, il prend son souffle et entame un chant diaphonique. Il s'agit de Bukhchuluun Ganburged, originaire de Mongolie où il était professeur d'université. Le cartel nous apprend que devant l'impossibilité de trouver du travail à son arrivée en Australie, ce dernier s'est mis à exécuter des chants de gorge au coin des rues de Sydney. L'écran s'éteint sur cette prodigieuse polyphonie. Quatrième et ultime écran. Dans sa voiture immobilisée en retrait, un homme à la peau noire siffle sur un fond de ville animée. Le son qu'il émet rappelle à s'y méprendre le chant d'un oiseau. Sa tête bat la mesure avec de petits balancements, son bras droit est au repos, posé contre la portière où ses doigts rythment une cadence. Il s'agit d'Asim Goreshi, multi-instrumentiste professionnel et chauffeur de taxi à Brisbane. On le surnomme aussi le taxi siffleur. Le cartel nous apprend que siffler le relie avec les grands siffleurs de son Soudan d'origine où, en l'absence d'instrument durant la période laborieuse des récoltes, les gens sifflent à partir de mélodies folkloriques. L'écran s'éteint sur cette dernière phénoménologie du corps-instrument. Au moment où nous nous apprêtons à reprendre le cycle du début, permutation inattendue ! Les quatre écrans s'illuminent à l'unisson et émettent de concert une ronde tous azimuts dont la partition puise

parcimonieusement parmi les échantillons sonores de chacun des tableaux précédents. À ce moment précis, le *Citizens Band... radio* forme un chœur dont chaque canal sollicite notre attention, s'agite à contresens comme pour (re)brasser les cartes avant de reprendre le jeu du destin.

Sous le doigté tout en retenue d'Angelica Mesiti, l'acte de performance *transporte*. L'espace entre soi et l'Autre devient véhicule expérientiel, les protagonistes émetteurs-récepteurs et le dispositif : espace hétérotopique². Les disciplines qu'elle engage ne sont pas sans rappeler la notion d'œuvre d'art totale³. Par ailleurs, l'artiste décrit comme *ready-made* la matière à partir de laquelle elle procède. Il y circule ce qui s'apparente au langage invisible du don où l'acte de réception, tel un saut mystérieux hors du déterminisme⁴, se doit de continuer à circuler⁵. Comme le suggère Jacqueline Millner, plutôt que de nous apparaître appauvrie, la richesse du monde s'offre comme multiple et nous engage dans un acte de rapprochement où l'artiste semble interroger le monde contemporain par le biais de la transmission : « *In the age of globalization, how do we retain agency? How do we practice integrity?* ». Comme si Angelica Mesiti⁷ posait la question : « *In today's world, where can transcendence be found* » ? Murray Schafer répondrait très certainement par *the tuning of the world*⁸. Il y cite

par ailleurs Walt Whitman :

Now I will do nothing but listen...
I hear all sounds running together, combined,
fused or following,
Sounds of the city and sounds out of the city,
sounds
of the day and night...

Maryse Morin

Issue des champs de la musique, des arts médiatiques ainsi que de l'anthropologie, **Maryse Morin** écrit depuis l'interstice entre l'art et l'anthropologie, et notamment les sensorystudies.org. Site web : MaryseMorin.ca

- 1 Jacques T. Godbout, *Ce qui circule entre nous*, Seuil, 2009, p. 15-16.
- 2 Michel Foucault, *Le corps utopique, Les hétérotopies*, Lignes, 2009.
- 3 Dans le sens wagnérien du terme.
- 4 Jacques T. Godbout, *Le langage du don*, Éditions Fides, 1996.
- 5 Marcel Mauss, *Essai sur le don. Forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques*, Presses Universitaires de France, 2007.
- 6 Jacqueline Millner, « The more global one is, the more local one desires to become », in Angelica Mesiti, *Being World. Contemporary Visual Art + Culture: Broadsheet*, 42.2, 2013, p. 104-107.
- 7 Il vaut la peine de souligner qu'Angelica Mesiti est Australienne de deuxième génération et que ses parents ont émigré de l'Italie vers l'Australie. Elle partage actuellement sa vie entre Paris et Sydney.
- 8 R. Murray Schafer, *The Tuning of the World*, New York, Knopf, 1977, p. 3.

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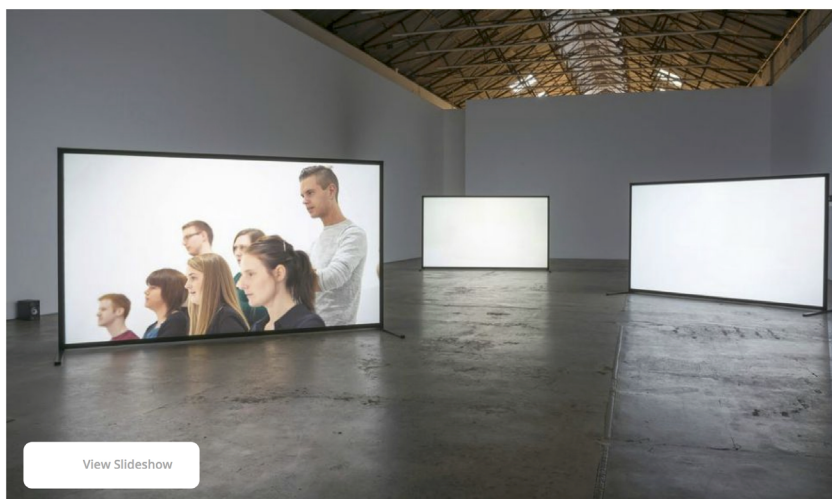
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Why Angelica Mesiti's "Colour of Saying" Will Stop You Dead

BY NICHOLAS FORREST | MAY 05, 2015



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Angelica Mesiti's "The Colour of Saying"
(Anna Schwartz)

How much do we really know about human interaction and expression? Although we probably know as much as there is to know about verbal expression in the form of language, what about the many forms of non-verbal expression? Sydney and Paris based video and performance artist Angelica Mesiti's new multi-channel video work "The Colour of Saying," currently on show at Sydney's [Anna Schwartz Gallery](#) until June 13, explores the role and significance of non-verbal interactions while at the same time questions how much we encode and decode of what we express through these non-verbal interactions. And it does all this within a multidimensional framework that activates the gallery space by connecting it the design of the stages in the videos, enlists the viewers as participants by leading them through the space, and establishes the inactive stages as minimalist abstract graphic scenes. It's an amazing work that transcends time, space, and dimension, and in doing so challenges the boundaries of the medium of video.

<http://au.blouinartinfo.com/news/story/1149327/why-angelica-mesitis-colour-of-saying-will-stop-you-dead/>

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"Why Angelica Mesiti's "Colour of Saying" Will Stop You Dead"
Par Nicholas Forrest

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"The Colour of Saying" is an interpretation of a live performance that was originally conceived for the Lilith Performance Studio in Malmo, Sweden as a live performance featuring collaborations with a sign language choir, musicians, and dancers. At Anna Schwartz Gallery the work is presented on three double-sided, free-standing screens, which show each of the three videos sequentially, leading viewers from one to another as each performance is screened. One screen shows a silent performance by a sign language choir who sign the choral piece "Serenade To Music" by Ralph Vaughan Williams. On another screen two older ballet dancers use only their hands to "dance" a pas de deux from "Swan Lake," again in silence until near the end. Rupturing the relative silence of the other two performances is a clapping performance by two percussionists.



The basis of the work is what Mesiti describes as "the nature of silence, imagined sound, and unheard songs." Venturing beyond the functionality of human communication, Mesiti exposes, celebrates, and explores the creativity and artistry of human interaction, and in the process initiates an experience that is so unfamiliar that it's almost unexplainable. In fact the experience is so unique that it has the power to stop viewers in their



tracks and command their complete attention. But as well as being an unusual experience, it's also a deeply satisfying one, perhaps because it seems to enact an engagement with the senses on a subconscious level and an activation of the periphery of perception. If you were to imagine human beings' perception of communication as an incomplete picture puzzle, this work has the effect of adding pieces to the puzzle and adding clarity to the picture of human interaction.

"The Colour of Saying" continues Mesiti's ongoing exploration of non-verbal communication, adapted methods of expression, and the diversity of human interaction. The catalyst for the performance was a group of deaf high school students that she encountered at an interchange train station in Paris. According to Mesiti, the typical teenagers were having a conversation in sign language that she says was "gesturally expressive." It was the expressive nature of the conversation that caught her attention and inspired the performance that led to the creation of the video work. Mesiti says that she has wanted to work with sign language for quite a while. "After I did 'The Calling' last year which focused on whistled language, this felt like a connection or a progression of thinking about other forms of embodied practice," she says.

Fulfilling Mesiti's desire to work with sign language, the first screen in the space shows the performance by the sign language choir which comprises a group of students who are learning to become sign language interpreters. With this performance Mesiti engages with the senses of sight and sound in a way that challenges the viewer to question how they interact with other people and also how they use and engage the senses of sight and sound, both individually and combined. Although the work is essentially silent (except for the faint sound of rustling clothes), you still feel compelled to stop and listen, to focus your senses and "hear" the work even though there is no sound. Some of the performers appear to be mouthing words as they are directed by the choir leader, which creates the illusion that they are to be able to hear the music, even though they are not listening to anything. It is even possible to imagine the music that the choir is "singing" from the rhythm and movement of their hands as well as the swaying of their bodies. Mesiti explains that the periods of swaying indicate a musical interlude when there are not lyrics to sign. "The swaying is a nice natural reaction to how you interpret the periods when there is nothing to sign so that your body is still responding and explaining that there is music," says Mesiti. "They came up with that because the orchestration is quite sparse. They just naturally started swaying in the music sections."

After the silence of the sign language choir, the sharp noise of the clapping performance is quite startling and rather unnerving. The captivating sound of the primitive, minimalist performance penetrates the gallery space, exposing and emphasizing the effectiveness of the human body as an instrument of expression while also heightening the senses and anchoring the work in the present reality.

<http://au.blouinartinfo.com/news/story/1149327/why-angelica-mesitis-colour-of-saying-will-stop-you-dead/>

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According to Mesiti, one of the reasons that she wanted to work with clapping is that for the hearing impaired percussion is the most perceptible part of music because of the way that vibrations reach the body. "As the sound waves enter the body of vibrations that is translated into rhythm by the body," she explains. "I wanted a point where the silence was ruptured by a very loud sound, but at the same time I wanted to maintain the focus on hand gestures. I wanted to basically be able to produce music in a really modest way without introducing any instruments," she adds.

The transition to the ballet performance reveals two veteran ballet dancers, Rolf Hepp and Jette Nejman (83 and 70 respectively) sitting down on the stage. Through these two older dancers, Mesiti celebrates the elegance, grace, and artistry of human interaction as well as the wisdom, beauty, and experience of age. As the performance begins, Hepp and Nejman Swan Lake begin "dancing" a pas de deux, but only using their hands and while remaining seated. This shorthand choreographic language, which is known as "hand marking," is used by dancers when they are injured or trying to conserve energy as a way of memorizing the choreography without having to perform the dance with their entire body. "We translated the choreography of the into the hand marking language for these mature dancers whose bodies are no longer trained up or have the capacity to perform the choreography in its original form, Mesiti explains. "It is a reimagining of the choreography that is adapted to their bodies in the stage that they are in right now. In a sense they are still performing Swan Lake but in a different way." The performance remains silent until near the end when the music that the dancers are listening to is revealed to the viewer.

One of the most interesting elements of "The Colour of Saying" is the aesthetics of the performance spaces and the way they appear on the screens, both during and after each performance. "Although this is a three dimensional space that has a practical purpose as a stage and seating, I liked that the image on the screen was almost bare, imperceptible, and graphic like an abstract image that holds the screen on its own," Mesiti explains. After each of the performances, when the participants leave the space, the image of the space remains on the screen, but it doesn't remain the same. In the absence of the shadows created by the performance, the space takes on the appearance of a minimalist abstract picture. When the performers return they activate the space, transforming it from an abstract to a figurative scene. The change in each space from occupied to vacant and vice versa is so drastic that it seems as though it is an entirely different space.

Reflecting on the development of "The Colour of Saying," Mesiti identifies a moment from one of the performances in Sweden as being particularly memorable. "I had a blind dancer come to one of the performances," she recalls. "It was quite astounding the way he experienced the performance. His friend, who was also a dancer, took his hand and moved it in the air to trace what the dancers were doing as a way of illustrating to him what was happening – what the action was that was taking place. What he was doing felt like a gestural thing that blended in with the rest of the performance." This experience testifies to Mesiti's talent for expressing her intentions, ideas, and concepts with authority, elegance, and clarity. It is with imaginative and experimental works such as "The Colour of Saying" that Mesiti established her international reputation, and through which she continues to justify her status as one of the most innovative and exciting video artists working today.

Angelica Mesiti's "The Colour of Saying" is at Anna Schwartz Gallery in Sydney until June 13, 2015

See video documentation of the performance in Sweden below

BLOUINARTINFO
19 Mai, 2015

"Why Angelica Mesiti's "Colour of Saying" Will Stop You Dead"
Par Nicholas Forrest

Angelica Mesiti explores silence in new video work at Anna Schwartz Gallery

April 14, 2015

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Clapping: Angelica Mesiti with her video artwork *The Colour of Saying* at Anna Schwartz Gallery. Photo: Edwina Pickles

Impact of modern life on rare whistling languages examined

Stage fright

Angelica Mesiti's choir performs *Serenade to Music* with emotion and energy, yet not a word passes their lips.

Instead, the group of Swedish students sing the lyrics with their hands, using a silent but expressive language.



Gesture: A Swedish sign language choir sings *Serenade to Music* in Angelica Mesiti's *The Colour of Saying*. Photo: Angelica Mesiti

"I thought it was very interesting this song was a celebration of the idea of music and at the same time a lament at the inability to hear a certain kind of music," Mesiti says. "I thought that was an interesting tension to explore in a silent language."

<http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/art-and-design/angelica-mesiti-explores-silence-in-new-video-work-at-anna-schwartz-gallery-20150415-1ml2uj.html>

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THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD
14 April 2015

"Angelica Mesiti explores silence in new video work at Anna Schwartz Gallery"
Par Andrew Taylor

5/19/2015

Angelica Mesiti explores silence in new video work at Anna Schwartz Gallery

The sign language choir is one of three acts in Mesiti's latest video work *The Colour of Saying*, which will be exhibited at Anna Schwartz Gallery from April 17.

Later, an elderly man and woman, both former dancers, perform a pas de deux from the ballet *Swan Lake*, without music, using only their hands.

Mesiti says the duo use a form of choreographic shorthand to act out the piece – a common method employed by dancers to conserve energy and avoid injury.

"In the sign language choir and the dancers it's accessing these alternative methods of imparting an idea but within a body [where] the normal method is not possible," she says.

The third part of Mesiti's exploration of gestural language is anything but quiet as two young men create a percussive racket by clapping their hands.

The Colour of Saying arose out of a commission from the Lilith Performance Studio, based in the Swedish city of Malmö, to create a live performance that explored how people speak and convey meaning with their hands.

One of Australia's most acclaimed video artists, Mesiti says the work relates to her previous work *The Calling*, which featured whistled language.

"It feels like I'm still working within the realm of performance and embodied performance," she says. "And working with people whose activities might not be considered performance in a traditional sense but framing it and staging it within a context that lets us think about it as performance."

Mesiti's *In the Ear of the Tyrant*, featuring a woman singing a traditional mourning song in a Sicilian cave, was shown at last year's Biennale of Sydney, while her *Citizens Band* won the Art Gallery of NSW's Anne Landa Award in 2013.

That video also won the praise of the *Herald's* art critic John McDonald – no fan of video art.

"Her 21-minute video, *Citizens Band*, is a cut above everything else in the show," he wrote. "It owes much of its appeal to a very simple structure that features four unusual musical performances, one after another, in the manner of an intimate concert."

Mesiti, who splits her time between Paris and Sydney, edits each work but engages a cinematographer to shoot footage. Her videos are technically accomplished and beautiful to watch.

"I like the way the language of cinema is very easily and clearly understood by everyone," she says. "You don't need any kind art education to understand the syntax and grammar of cinema."

"I kind of like this language is so familiar and perhaps allows access into the work in a very simple way."

Mesiti's upcoming projects include a work for Carriageworks' *24 Frames Per Second* that depicts a French-Algerian dancer performing a dance involving her hair and another work for Doug Aitken's *Station to Station: A 30 Day Happening* at London's Barbican in June.

Mesiti says the dancer shows the erotic and sensual nature of hair, particularly in cultures where a veil is worn.

"I couldn't help seeing how this north African dance has echoes in Beyonce video clips," she says.

Angelica Mesiti's *The Colour of Saying* is at Anna Schwartz Gallery from April 17 to June 13.

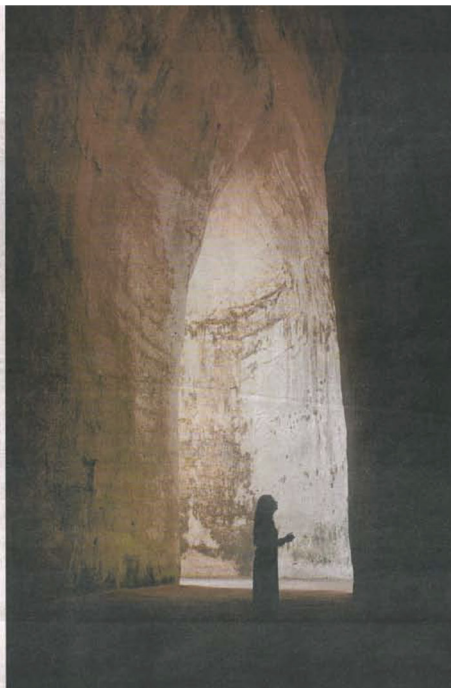


Shorthand: Mesiti's *The Colour of Saying* also features two dancers performing *Swan Lake*. Photo: Angelica Mesiti

THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD
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"Angelica Mesiti explores silence in new video work at Anna Schwartz Gallery"
Par Andrew Taylor

10 VISUAL ARTS

Video stills from Angelica Mesiti's *In the Ear of the Tyrant* (2013), left

WE were in the Mediterranean in these pages last week, and we are figuratively speaking there again with the work of Angelica Mesiti, whose own family originates from southern Italy, a place where Greek and Italian traditions mingled in antiquity and assimilated other more exotic influences over subsequent centuries. We are also, unusually, in both Sydney and Melbourne, for Mesiti has a fine work in each city: one as part of the Biennale of Sydney at the Art Gallery of NSW, and the other, the inaugural Ian Potter Moving Image Commission, at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image in Melbourne.

The two pieces are at first sight rather different, but each constitutes in its way a meditation on the human voice in a natural setting — one in a place that amplifies the voice and the other in environments in which it is lost or has difficulty carrying through the extent of space and over the competing noises of nature or of other human activities.

The Biennale work, *In the Ear of the Tyrant*, is set in a location that will be familiar to anyone who has been to Syracuse, on the east coast of Sicily. All tourists visit the latomie, the famous quarries which today combine massive cliff faces with a fragrant orange grove, but which 2500 years ago were used as a hellish concentration camp for the Athenian soldiers and sailors taken prisoner after their disastrous attempt to conquer the city.

Within the quarry is a cave that once served as a water cistern and has a distinctive shape like the ear of a faun; it is said to have been given the name by which it is now known — the Ear of Dionysius — by Caravaggio, who was in Syracuse for a time in 1609, on the run from his various enemies, including the family of a youth he had murdered and the Knights of Malta. The Dionysius he meant was the ancient tyrant of Syracuse, and perhaps the connection of his name to that of the god Dionysus, lord of fauns and satyrs, explains the conflation of these various elements.

The real reason for naming the cave, how-

LEND MESITI YOUR EARS

Christopher Allen

Angelica Mesiti, *The Calling*
Australian Centre for the Moving Image,
Melbourne, to July 13

In the Ear of the Tyrant
Art Gallery of NSW (Biennale of Sydney) to June 9

ever, was not simply its unusual size and shape, but its peculiar acoustic properties. The shape of the curved walls acts as a kind of amplifier as well as an echo-chamber. So the story that came to be associated with this place was that Dionysius had kept his political enemies locked up here and could eavesdrop on their conversations, as though in a giant ear-trumpet, from a point above.

The local tour guides not only recount these picturesque legends but, as part of the demonstration of the cave's acoustics, quite often sing for the group they are leading. Angelica Mesiti has adapted this custom but employed a gifted Italian singer, Enza Pagliara, who sings not snatches of opera or popular melodies but Greek ritual lament, traditionally sung over the dead from time immemorial, but like all such traditions gradually failing in the bland and amnesic environment of contemporary culture.

The lament thus takes on a new meaning here, like a memorial for the loss of folk traditions everywhere, the gradual extinction of popular cultures in a world dominated by the irresistible tide of industrially-made cultural products, whether film, music, computer games or even clothing. Cultural traditions developed and produced by the people themselves to give their own lives shape, ornament and meaning, are replaced by meaningless kitsch designed by members of the so-called creative class and sold to a populace now reduced to the passive status of mass consumers.

Ritual lamentation is in itself not merely an archaic survival of peasant life but an important category of verbal performance. Some scholars indeed consider the art of poetry itself to have originated in words spoken or sung over the dead, just as, in a wider sense, all art is a resistance to the entropy of mortality. Rhythm, repetition, the use of a conventional vocabulary that may be remote from current colloquial usage, all of these are also intrinsic to the language used in ritual and sacred contexts, something too often forgotten by modern churches, in their headlong rush to align their language with that of the supermarket and the television news bulletin.

The logic of poetic language is contrary to

such utility. The language of everyday exchange unfolds in time, delivering information that is understood by the listener or reader, while the message itself, once decoded, is discarded. In poetry, metrical or stanzaic structure, and when present the echo of rhyme, give language a recursive, repetitive, essentially non-linear form, even when other aspects of the work do develop sequentially. The words are not discarded once understood, but continue to resound in the mind, and the directionless flow of ordinary conversational speech is gathered into a cyclical movement: like the difference between people walking across a square and dancing in a circle.

This is why poetry and music, though existing in a temporal mode, give us the paradoxical sense that time has stopped, as in John Dowland's song *Time Stands Still*. And this is what happens with the singing in the cave too. As the ancient lament echoes through the curved hollow of the walls, we find ourselves neither in the past nor the future, but in the stillness of the present; we become acutely aware of our surroundings, of the texture of stone, the light and the dark, ultimately glimpsing a timelessness beyond the temporality whose most brutal work is the fact of death.

Mesiti's other piece, *The Calling*, is also concerned with language, but, ostensibly at least, in a far more utilitarian manifestation. The work is a kind of poetic documentary on the whistling languages or communication systems that survive around the Mediterranean and, what is particularly intriguing, among peoples whose natural languages and even ethnic backgrounds are very diverse. Mesiti has looked at three communities in particular, one in the northern Turkish village of Kusko, another on the Greek island of Euboea (sometimes written as Evis in the Latin alphabet, because of changes in the pronunciation of modern Greek), and the third on La Gomera in the Canary Islands.

The difference between Mesiti's work and a documentary in the ordinary sense of the word is that the former would explain the history, possible origins, motivations and present state of the practice, while she simply shows us its reality without commentary, but employing selection, juxtaposition and editing to guide us towards an understanding of the phenomenon. The use of three projection screens allows for a variety of effects: we can be shown either different things taking place at some distance from each other or the continuity of a vast panorama, both of which can serve the artist's purposes.

The three communities are dealt with in successive sections, shown on a loop with no beginning or end. I happened to come in at the beginning of the Turkish one, and this is in perhaps the most logical episode to start with, because it is the most mysterious and suggestive, while the themes become clearer in the Greek episode that follows and more explicit in the Spanish one that comes after that.

The Turkish section begins with a man standing on a rooftop overlooking Istanbul, at the traditional boundary of Europe and Asia, and calling out or rather whistling to the unresponsive, uncomprehending modern city. Then suddenly we are in a remote peasant community and immediately we are aware that this is a work as much about sound as about visual impressions. There is the gushing of water from a mill, the grinding of the mill itself, the rustle of the wind blowing through leaves and bushes, and later the rattle of an old sewing machine.

And then we have the first instance of the whistling language, as the miller calls to a boy sitting on the bank to go and fetch more grain. Here and in later episodes it becomes clear that one of the main functions of the whistling language is simply to be heard above competing

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GIVE US THE
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THAT TIME HAS
STOPPED**

a signal that he is expecting and whose sense is conventional. Later, in an episode in which a Greek shepherd whistles to his flock, the range of signals understood by the animals is obviously very limited. It recalls, incidentally, what could be one of the first cases of whistling language recorded in literature, when the Hellenistic poet Theocritus has a goatherd call "sitta" to the animals, an onomatopoeia which may stand for a whistled warning.

But there is no doubt the whistling languages Mesiti documents are capable of detailed semantic content — as we see in another episode already mentioned, where a man gives detailed instructions to another to buy some animal feed for him in town and bring it back to his house. In these exchanges, subtitles allow us to read what is going on, and also make it clear that the whistling is not strictly a language in itself but rather a way of encoding a natural language as whistled sounds.

It is in the Canary Islands that we see what may be the future for this strange and no doubt very ancient tradition: evolving into a tourist attraction — the announcement on the ferry is given in Spanish and then whistled, and waiters in a restaurant do demonstrations for tourists — it is also being taught in schools, when of course in past centuries it would have been learnt solely by practice within the community. Its fate is emblematic of much traditional culture today: preserved partly because cultural authenticity is a tourist drawcard and partly from a love of tradition, a sense of memory, and a clinging to identity in an increasingly homogenised world.

noise, although Mesiti's soundscapes become fascinating in their own right. Later in Euboea we see people communicating over the competing noises of wind farms and car engines.

The other reason for this system that becomes increasingly apparent — more in the Greek episode than the Turkish — is the need to communicate across distances. This is not a means for city people to chat to each other, but for peasants to get messages across the considerable space that may separate one side of a valley from the other, for example, in the kind of environment in which they work and spend their lives. And of course, as Mesiti's work makes very clear, distance is compounded by the competing noises already mentioned.

Under these circumstances, whistling carries much further than speech, and with minimal distortion of the message. And what is remarkable is how effectively that message can be transmitted. In the section already mentioned, in which the miller calls to the boy, we may suspect that the whistle is little more than



Video stills
from Mesiti's
The Calling,
top and left

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"Lend Mesiti in your ears"
Par Christopher Allen

Angelica Mesiti hearkens to whistling language in *The Calling* at ACMI

Robert Nelson
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The Calling
Angelica Mesiti
Australian Centre For The Moving Image
Federation Square Until July 13

Nestled in the hilly regions of north-eastern Turkey lies the remote mountain community of Kuskoy, known as the "village of the birds". This evocative epithet owes its image not to any avian wildlife but to the humans who sound like birds when they whistle to one another across the valleys.

Angelica Mesiti takes us to the rugged terrain with beautiful cinematography and recording. We witness the conversations, subtitled in Turkish and translated into English. The piercing tones of the whistling penetrate the air for large distances and connect the people with prime fidelity.

Mesiti's focus is divided between the fine whistling of the farmers and their geographical circumstances, their work, the way that they harvest tea or figs or sharpen a hatchet to chop wood. It's a largely pre-industrial community, where you milk goats by hand and live by the seasons.

Lyrical and expansive, the work isn't conceived as anthropology but centres poetically on the mystery of language and its development in a bed of metaphor, close to the earth and other creatures.

In her three-channel video, Mesiti visits two other magical places where whistled language persists against the onslaught of globalisation. They're regions where your iPhone would be out of range but also where the locals would consider SMS a redundancy. They whistle and get replies faster than you can type.

It's a language beyond earshot, a way of transforming the spoken tongue so that it goes much further than voice. We make language through a fine combination of sounds from our vocal cords and quiet forms of conditioning them through consonants. This delicate mixture doesn't travel well. Whistling, on the other hand, consists of potent tones that rise and fall with inflections of pitch and length.

Theoretically infinite, the whistling system can translate any complicated pattern that arises in spoken language.

Mesiti first takes us to the Greek island of Evia, where windmills now generate electricity from the formidable ocean blast but farming holds out upon challenging terrain. As an ironic backdrop, the infrastructure of windfarms symbolises the growth of industry and screen media - that potent instrument of globalisation and marketing culture - which threatens to obliterate local traditions such as whistled language.

Passing over the vast rooftop landscape of dense Istanbul, where whistled language also survives, the trilogy concludes in the Canary Islands, where the Spanish language (phonologically similar to Greek) is also whistled. We witness a government program designed to educate young people in the technique, to keep it alive against the same globalisation that kills indigenous languages in Australia.

Whistling isn't a language in its own right but depends upon the conventional pronunciation of words. As an expressive graft of an established language, however, the whistling eerily reveals how close we are to other creatures who communicate by moans or barks or yaps or shrill trilling registers.

It redoubles your wonder about what they share with us, what fabulous intelligence they can convey, as when they navigate thousands of kilometres to identify their point of departure with perfect accuracy. Because her work is also emphatically visual, Mesiti invites us to have a special sympathy with a life close to the land and to other animals. In one sense, it's primitive, but in the sense that language itself is primitive: actually, it's the most sophisticated thing that we have.

Artists have long relished this paradox, that the greatest magic inheres in the simplest intelligence.

THE AGE
12 Février 2014

"Angelica Mesiti hearkens to whistling language in *The Calling* at ACMI"
Par Robert Nelson



the music of language

REBECCA COATES

There's a moment in Angelica Mesiti's four-channel video installation *Citizens Band* (2012) when you can almost watch audience members become seduced. The figure of the blind accordionist playing and singing in the Paris Metro is hauntingly beautiful, and the two other male musicians are meditatively poetic as, in moody hues, they respectively play a Chinese cello and whistle. But it is the combination of colour, movement and musical sound created by the young African woman, as she drums the water surface standing waist deep in the shallow end of a Parisian pool, which really brings the viewer to a halt. I've watched this process now a number of times: at the work's premiere as part of *NEW12* at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art; as the winner of the Art Gallery of New South Wales' 2013 Anne Landa Award for video and new media; and most recently as part of the 13th *Istanbul Biennial*, *Mom am I Barbarian?* (2013). As this list attests, the work has attracted widespread interest locally and internationally.

What is it about Mesiti's immersive, cinematic-quality installations that captivates audiences, collectors and curators? Mesiti suggests she wanted to explore the cultural histories carried by and expressed through music in *Citizens Band* (2012).¹ This work does just that, but there is clearly more that tantalises audiences to stay much longer than the standard exhibition stop before a video work—typically two to three minutes unless there's good seating and their legs are tired. Even in video-laden biennial contexts, viewers consistently stayed for more than the full cycle. In *Citizens Band*, Mesiti captures the heightened states of rapture and performance of these everyday musicians. Arguably, her work enables audiences to share this internalised state—as if the musical rhythms pass into and via their own physical bodies, and the audiences become part of the visceral experience of making a musically transcendent sound.

Mesiti consistently explores the emotional and physical states of transformative sound and rapture. *Rapture (silent anthem)* (2009), a high definition video of approximately ten minutes, captures close-up details of exquisite youths' faces and expressions. We are unclear what has generated this state. It could be a religious experience—Christian youths attracted to the gospel of a charismatic preacher—or more possibly, celebrity and musical cult idolatry at a rock concert. All that is missing is the accompanying sound: instead, the massed voices surging in an ecstasy of transformative sounds must be conjured in each viewer's head, as each scripts his or her own soundtrack.

Presented at the 2014 *Biennale of Sydney: You Imagine What you Desire*, Mesiti's recent video installation, *In the Ear of the Tyrant* (2013-14), again explored the transformative power of the human voice. It was inspired by songs of lamentation from southern Italy and the women whom a community traditionally employed to sing songs of mourning for the death of one of their own. It has a particular resonance for the artist, whose own origins hark from the Italian South. Mesiti re-interprets the grieving ritual in collaboration with the Italian vocalist Enza Pagliara. The performance is filmed in the flawless acoustics of an ancient limestone cave—known as the Ear of Dionysius—near the Sicilian city of Syracuse. A series of highly charged and emotive close-ups and panoramas of the singer in this extraordinary, natural cathedral-like space lured many in the audience into a reverential swoon. In its use of musical traditions and the power of the human voice, it was reminiscent of Iranian artist Shirin Neshat's cinematic video installations some fifteen years earlier, shown to critical acclaim at the *Venice Biennale*. *Turbulent* (1998), Neshat's two-screen video installation contrasting the voices and performances of male and female Iranian singers became a powerful musical metaphor for gender and cultural

difference examined through the traditions of ancient Persian music and poetry. The viewer became an active part of the experience: located between opposite screens featuring the two singers as they sang the public and private songs of a musical tradition in a fundamentalist State. *In the Ear of the Tyrant* did not actively co-opt viewers in the same way. Instead, audience members were spectators to a highly charged drama played beneath a geological proscenium arch. The video work's pathos was a little like a *bel canto* vibrato: without a very deft touch, it can be light on subtlety and appear overblown.

The Calling (2014), Mesiti's most recent video installation, sees her returning to a quieter, more measured and nuanced exploration of cultural histories expressed in musical form. It reflects on a globalised world encroaching on ancient traditions and linguistic customs. Its subject is the whistling languages of three cultures, Kuskoy (Turkey), Antia (Greece) and La Gomera (the Canary Islands). It examines the ongoing survival and usage of these ancient traditions of language and sound in the face of globalisation, technological progress and environmental flux. Interest in the whistling language developed from Mesiti's earlier work *Citizens Band*, in which one of the four featured musicians whistled as his instrument of choice. Whereas that work was about music making, and the way that music transcends cultural difference and specificity of race, *The Calling* is about broadly dispersed languages sharing a feature now almost lost.

Popular in linguistic research in the 1960s, the study of whistling languages and other less common forms of communication now seems to be relegated to an obscure cultural rarity—occasionally profiled on National Geographic's Discovery Channel on cable TV, programmed late at night. As a form of communication, however, it captures our imagination. It's at odds with

THE MUSIC OF LANGUAGE



our technologically assisted channels that keep us all tied to our electronic devices, and eternally linked. Mesiti's poetic video reveals this disparity. As indigenous languages disappear and many others are anglicised through neologisms, capturing the essence of a language—quite possibly without notation or written form—from a visual art perspective rather than an anthropological position seems timely.

Above and opposite:
Angelica Mesiti
The Calling (video stills), 2013–14
Photos courtesy the artist
and Anna Schwarz Gallery, Melbourne and Sydney

Mesiti's *The Calling* is the inaugural Ian Potter Moving Image Commission, a collaboration between The Ian Potter Cultural Trust and the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI). The commission aims to allow a mid-career artist to produce an ambitious new work, which demonstrates a major development or shift in their practice. Mesiti talks about the impact of this commission on her working methodology in her interview with Amita Kirpalani for the exhibition room brochure. She notes that it allowed her to slow down her working process, developing the work over a full year. She was able to take an observational approach when visiting the

locations and communities for the first time, slowly developing an understanding of how the language was used in its specific cultural and geographic terrain. Filming and performances on a second visit were thus less formal than in many of Mesiti's earlier works. Feedback from the communities was integral to the process, and this ensured that the filming of everyday actions and activities, though scripted, appeared natural and unstaged.

In each of these locations, the whistling language is used for different purposes and captured in different ways. The film starts in Istanbul, a city that straddles East and West, with swallows swooping over



rooftops as a lone figure is silhouetted against an pink-hued sky. The sounds of traffic, call to prayer, and birdcalls create a muted music of everyday noise. On moving to Kuskoy, a remote mountain village in Turkey's mountainous parts, the camera lingers on the sur-suration of water over pebbles, or the threshing of corn from a pre-industrial past. We see the women picking tea tips, gathering them into coloured, cloth-bound bundles, and waiting for the truck to arrive to take away this seasonal crop. These people are not trained actors: they go about their daily life. Whistling in this context is used as a language to alert those in the fields to everyday events – to come in for lunch, or that the truck has arrived. The language is active, and continues to be passed down from one generation to the next. In the Greek island of Antia, however, the whistling language has all but disappeared. The population is aging,

younger generations have disappeared to capital cities, and global industries and new technologies have arrived. Electricity pylons contrast with goats, as we are alerted to their movements via the gentle ringing of their bells, or the sound of a bell tolling from an Orthodox church. The slow whomp-whomp of a wind-farm's turning blades contrasts with the quiet sounds and rocky terrain of the once agricultural community.

In the Canary Islands, the language has been resurrected. Again, Mesiti focuses on small details that are easily overlooked – the tracery of a spider-web woven between cactus spikes, as it floats gently in the breeze. A grandfather whistles across a crevasse to his grandson on the side of a road, who responds in words. The whistling language, for this younger generation, is now part of a school curriculum that differentiates their culture from other parts

of the globe. Government support via education programs ensures that the language does not completely disappear. Instead, it becomes a product of the economics of conservation and tourism, a curiosity or sideshow for hungry visitors searching for something unusual, artisan and 'new'.

Mesiti's video installations may have explored notions of transcendence and the performativity of musical language in its various forms. The very success of *The Calling* lies both in its exploration of language, music and different cultures and the everyday, and once again, in what Mesiti leaves unsaid.

Note
1 Angelica Mesiti interview with Charlotte Day, curator
Anne Landa Award for video and new media 2013, AGNSW,
<http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/channel/clip/480/>



FRAGMENTS OF CINEMA

ANGELICA MESITI'S POETIC VIDEO WORKS EMBRACE AND SUBVERT THE CINEMATIC DEVICE

by Dan Rule

It's like an admission of guilt, complete with coy smile and whispered cadence, a good hour into our conversation. Nonetheless, it articulates the aesthetic and philosophical positioning of Angelica Mesiti's distinctly cinematic art practice in the most pragmatic, matter-of-fact terms. Put simply, she isn't one for narrative.

"You know what?" she grins. "I often get really bored in films because I really don't care about the plot." A pause. "I don't know if you've seen *The Master*, P.T. Anderson's recent film with Joaquin Phoenix and Philip Seymour Hoffman, but it was criticised because it didn't go anywhere and I just loved it for that reason.

"It just generated a world and an atmosphere and you understood the logic."

It may seem a curious assertion for someone whose work so closely resembles the stylistic cues and archetypes of the cinematic form, but the 36-year-old's output – including her acclaimed four-channel work, *Citizens Band*, which proved the highlight of the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art's (ACCA) NEW12 exhibition – retracts and repositions film's defining signposts and devices as much as it embraces them.

"I feel very comfortable with the medium and feel very comfortable as a visual artist coming at the medium from somewhere with slightly different intentions," offers Mesiti, who spends most of the year in Paris, where she lives with her partner. "I like the fact that there's this craft that has these rules and conventions that apply to it, which I feel that I understand and can bend a little bit."

It's a sentiment that resonates throughout today's conversation, which plays out 10 floors above Sydney's CBD in a friend's temporary apartment, which has become something of a transitory studio for Mesiti while home in Sydney after being awarded the \$100,000 inaugural Ian Potter Foundation Moving Image Commission developed in conjunction with the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI). Her research-based practice espouses cinema's visual language, all the while eschewing its want for linearity.

"I'm drawn to image-making and documentation more than these conventional narrative structures," she says. "I'm interested in exploring other ways of viewers interacting with moving image work, rather than just the passive involvement of the cinema."

In many ways, Mesiti's position should come as little surprise. Her wider body of work has nimbly diverged across film, notions of performance and personal

and cultural histories. Her 2009 video *Rapture (silent anthem)* turned the lens on young music fans caught in the euphoric grip of a festival set, while her decade-long membership of performance squad The Kingpins saw she, Técha Noble, Emma Price and Katie Price garner a cultish international following for their caustic, faux-moustachioed fem-punk happenings. Her more recent video works – such as *The Begin Again*, 2011, which was commissioned as part of the Museum of Contemporary Art's (MCA) C3 West program – have seen her collaborate with subjects to develop unconventional performances in specific public contexts, effectively blurring the tenets and languages of documentary, cinema and contemporary art.

Her background echoes such a varied approach. Growing up in Sydney, she longed to become a professional dancer throughout her teens and was awarded a scholarship to study contemporary dance at London's prestigious Laban Centre on graduating high school. But it wasn't to be, with the gruelling experience proving to Mesiti that she wasn't "obsessed enough" to become a dancer. "I was also really interested in going to university and visual art was the other area I was drawn to," she recalls. "It felt like a much broader world than the world of dance at that time for me."

She continued to work with different elements of performance whilst studying at Sydney's College of Fine Arts (COFA), collaborating with a Butoh choreographer and developing various works. "I feel like I've really had a long relationship with performance," she says. "I've always been interested in that form of expression in some way."

It was while at COFA that Mesiti fell in with a group of artists who would go on to found the now infamous live-in warehouse and artist-run initiative Imperial Slacks in Surry Hills. Aside from she and her Kingpins collaborators, the likes of Shaun Gladwell, Sean Cordeiro, Claire Healy, Michael Schiavello, Monika Tichacek, Chris Fox, Wade Marynowsky and others brought their miscellaneous practices to the space, which garnered a reputation for its wildly experimental shows and performances. Mesiti, remembers the time fondly, describing her early days with The Kingpins in terms of an odd kind of "skill-sharing".

"I was up there onstage in the gold bikini," she laughs, referring to their 2004 work *Mensclub Versus Remix*, in which Mesiti and Katie Price assumed the roles of adoring, studded cheerleaders swooning over Técha Noble and Emma Price's blinged up boxers-come-rappers. "We were always the back-up dancers to Técha and Emma's grotesquery."

As The Kingpins started to gain notoriety, Mesiti began to shift her own practice, moving increasingly towards film. She went on to work in the film industry after completing her masters at COFA in 2006, working as an assistant editor on feature films and shorts with the likes of Warwick Thornton and others. It was an important step for Mesiti, who describes her time as an editor as her "apprenticeship to the craft". Indeed, by the late 2000s, she began to reframe the way she approached the notion of performance. "I became more interested stepping away from being the performer and instead looking at the performance of other people," she explains.

"In particular, I like the idea of people who are maybe not performing for an audience or are maybe not professional performers... cultural activity that is live in some way or another, but doesn't come from a formal framework, so maybe it's a bit more peripheral or something."

It's an idea that manifests in *Citizens Band* to stunning effect. Comprising four inward-facing screens arranged in square formation, the piece captures the musical performances of four immigrant protagonists, which prove strikingly unconventional in the context of their adopted homelands. While vision-impaired Algerian songwriter Mohammad Lamourie performs on the Paris metro with his cheap, haphazardly taped-together keyboard, Cameroonian Geraldine Zongo uses a Paris public pool to unleash a barrage of water percussion. The piece also works its way to Australia, capturing Mongolian throat singer Bukhchuluun Ganburged playing a traditional stringed instrument and singing on a street corner in Newtown, Sydney and Sudanese taxi driver Asim Goreshi whistling a startlingly tender and complex melody in the front seat of his Brisbane cab.



ANGELICA MESITI
Citizens Band, 2012
high definition video, 16:9, PAL, surround sound
Duration: 21 mins 25 secs
Courtesy the artist and Anna Schwartz Gallery, Sydney

The work, which found its genesis when Mesiti witnessed Lamourie busking on her metro carriage as she travelled home one day, strikes a rare balance between intimacy and complexity – a humanist cinematic mode and an evocative subtlety – that tips it over the “knife-edge” and into the realm of contemporary art, rather than a more sentimental filmic mode. The personal intensity of the performances and cultural specificity of their cadences teases out the disparity of cultural tradition and contemporary urban reality, the pangs of personal history, upheaval, joy and tragedy echoing with them.

“I really wanted to explore music as this incredible way of translating or retaining cultural connections,” says Mesiti.

Nonetheless, the work exists well outside of the narrative impulse. “I don’t feel like I’m a storyteller,” she says. “When I think about my work and what I’m interested in doing, it’s generating an accumulative meaning, rather than this idea of a linear building up of logic.”

“I don’t think we think in that way so much anymore: we don’t live in a linear kind of world. We’re receiving information in so much more of a collaged kind of way. It kind of makes more sense that filmmaking is changing to reflect that too.”

The Ian Potter Foundation commission, which will be presented at ACMI in 2014, gestures toward some similar formal and thematic modes.

Dubbed *The Calling*, the multi-channel video work – which Mesiti is currently in the midst of researching – focuses on three communities in Turkey, Greece and the Canary Islands that have long used whistled languages to communicate over long distances; dialects that are now in danger of dying out.

“Like a lot of my work, it’s looking at cultural activity that is evolving or changing because of its circumstances,” she posits. “Whether that’s through migration or just the changing nature of contemporary life.”

And for Mesiti, the widely recognised vernacular of cinema is the most effective platform from which to communicate such ideas, narrative or no. “Cinema offers a language that is incredibly familiar to a very broad audience and it’s immediately understandable, and I think that that’s a really rich place to communicate from,” she pauses, considering the statement for a moment.

“I feel like once you’ve opened up a space for people to enter into the work in a really unthreatened way, then you’re able to tell and do a whole lot more.”

Angelica Mesiti’s work shows as part of *We used to talk about love* – Balnave’s contemporary; photomedia at the Art Gallery of New South Wales until April 21. Angelica Mesiti is represented by Anna Schwartz Gallery, Sydney.

UNE BIENNALE DE SHARJAH
TOUT EN MUSICALITÉ

PAR ROXANA AZIMI

Si la dernière édition de la Biennale de Sharjah en 2011, aux Émirats arabes unis, a pu sembler confuse voire creuse, plombée de surcroît par une navrante affaire de censure ayant précipité la démission de l'ancien directeur artistique Jack Persekian, le nouveau cru baptisé « Re:emerge Towards a Cultural Cartography » offre une partition autrement plus maîtrisée, mais aussi plus roborative dans un dédale de vieilles maisons, d'une banque désaffectée et de cinq *white cubes* fraîchement construits. En apparence, la curatrice japonaise Yuko Hasegawa semble déminer toute controverse en s'appuyant sur le motif de la cour intérieure, récurrent dans l'architecture islamique. Les installations en extérieur de SANAA, Superflex ou Ernesto Neto sont d'ailleurs des plus inoffensives. Ne vous y méprenez pas. Malgré cette entrée en matière très soft, la commissaire offre un discours tendu autour des questions d'identité, d'hybridation et de familiarité. C'est une savante bande son qui apparaît au final comme le fil rouge reliant tous les territoires convoqués. La musique actionne notre mémoire dans la grande installation sonore *Peace is not what you believe* du groupe marocain Kamarstudios, où des sons à la fois familiers et distants bourdonnent dans nos oreilles, nous mettant presque en condition pour le reste du voyage. Car c'est bien d'un périple qu'il s'agit avec le triptyque vidéo *Session* de Nevin Aladag, tourné à Sharjah et dans ses environs. Sable, vent et végétations participent d'une étrange polyphonie en activant des instruments à percussion indien, africain ou arabe. L'idée d'hybridation est poussée à son extrême dans une autre vidéo de cette artiste, *Famille Tezcan*, où les membres d'une famille allemande d'origine turque improvisent des chorégraphies mêlant danse traditionnelle orientale et hip hop américain. **La métaphore se file dans l'installation vidéo *Citizens Band* d'Angelica Mesiti, où exil et immigration font muter les musiques traditionnelles.** La question du déplacement revêt une dimension autrement plus tragique dans le travail du Libanais Marwan Rechmaoui. Celui-ci a reproduit des cartes réalisées par les habitants de cinq camps palestiniens au Liban. On y lit la topographie des camps, mais aussi les goûts personnels des réfugiés habituellement traités en masse abstraite et silencieuse. Le film *Dilbar* d'Apichatpong Weerasethakul et Chai Siri prend aussi le parti pris si ce n'est de l'évasion, du moins du rêve avec le portrait d'un immigré bangladais ayant œuvré à la construction des nouveaux espaces de la Sharjah Art Foundation. Les hallucinations contaminent peu à peu sa vie comateuse régie entre le camp-dortoir et le chantier.

La translation se solde par une inversion de contexte dans *Dictums*, relique d'une performance réalisée par Wael Shawky lors du vernissage. L'artiste égyptien avait convié 32 chanteurs

Sara Rahbar, *Texas Flower Flag #22*, 2008. Photo : D. R.

et musiciens pakistanais à interpréter sur le mode d'un chant soufi des fragments d'anciennes conférences de presse de la Biennale de Sharjah. Le jargon de l'art contemporain serait-il soluble dans un chant urdu ? Sans doute pour les visiteurs qui en ignorent le livret et qui s'abandonnent délicieusement à la mélodie ! L'effet d'entraînement connaît ses limites. Le passage d'une rive à l'autre en petit bateau à moteur pour goûter une glace au sel ou au poivre, proposé par l'artiste japonais Shimabuku, nous laisse de marbre. Cette excursion est-elle censée favoriser une porosité avec les usagers réguliers de ces embarcations ? Si tel est le but, le résultat est raté, car autochtones et *art settlers* se jaugent avec une certaine gêne. Étanches les uns aux autres, les premiers restent des inconnus, les seconds des intrus. De cette plate expérience qui ne parvient ni à déclencher une connivence avec la population locale ni à offrir une saine distance avec l'art au profit du quotidien, il ne reste au final que le ronronnement du moteur. Le son, encore et toujours. ■

11^e BIENNALE DE SHARJAH, jusqu'au 13 mai, différents lieux, Sharjah, www.sharjahart.org

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